

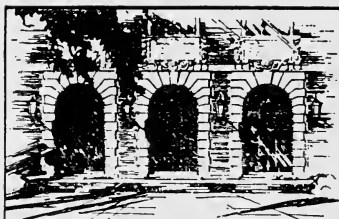
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Caroline Henrietta "
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AIMS AND ENDS:

AND

OONAGH LYNCH:

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CARWELL."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
EDWARD BULL, HOLLES STREET.

1833.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of "Carwell," when that tale was first published, was blamed by some for having claimed attention to distresses too mean for sympathy, and characters too degraded for compassion. Her hope in writing that story, was to interest, by describing feelings true to nature.

But this reproach, combined with the assurance of friends and publishers, that it required more aristocratic affliction to interest the novel-reading public, has induced her to attempt a story in the style at present considered the most popular. This must be the apology for a sort of flippancy, which ought not to survive

"The frail, vain hopes of youth."

ADVERTISEMENT.

Oonagh Lynch is of a different and more romantic description. The preference shown to either of these stories, will decide the caste of any future fiction attempted by the same writer, should she again appear before the public.

AIMS AND ENDS.

La félicité est dans le gout, et non par dans les choses ; et c'est par avoir ce qu'on aime qu'on est heureux, non par avoir ce que les autres trouvent aimable.—ROCHEFOUCAULD.

“ The gods, to curse Pamela with her prayers,
Gave the gilt coach and dappled Flanders mares.”

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AIMS AND ENDS.

CHAPTER I.

IF you are young, handsome, and have just completed the most anxious toilette you ever accomplished in your life, you will be able to comprehend the immense pleasure and satisfaction with which Olinda Vavasour looked at herself, in a large swing glass on a certain Tuesday. Nay, perhaps, if you are neither young nor handsome, if you are in the habit of looking in large swing glasses, you will comprehend the nature of her amusement. I am sorry to give you the idea of her possessing so large a share of vanity, but truth obliges me to

confess, that she not only regarded herself *en face*, with considerable attention for some minutes, but by the aid of a little mermaid-looking glass which she held in her hand, she contrived to obtain some idea of the effect her profile *might* produce, and some transitory glimpses of the back of her head and waist; though in this last contemplation she had not an opportunity of indulging to satiety, partly from the small size of the hand-glass, and partly because the second dinner bell rang a deafening peal, and Mrs. Shuldham, Lady Portbury's femme de chambre, covered with frills and flounces, entered to request Miss Vavasour would go to that lady, that they might descend together to the drawing-room.

"I wanted to see how you have dressed yourself, Olinda—pretty well—but that ringlet hangs too low; and what a pity your hair is so dark, it would really be pretty if it was five or six shades lighter," continued Lady Portbury, complacently looking on her own dressing-glass,

which reflected a pretty face and a profusion of bright hair, which her friends called auburn, and her foes called *red*; “but come, we are shockingly late.”

While they are descending, it must be known that this is Olinda’s first appearance in London, or indeed, anywhere; the eighteen years she had lived having been spent tête-à-tête with her mother, in a cottage in Wales, to which retirement they had been condemned by poverty, the consequence of Mr. Vavasour’s having spent a good fortune early in life.

Mrs. Vavasour was accomplished, and had taken great pains in Olinda’s education. Their cottage was close to the gate of a magnificent castle. The proprietor had been a friend of Vavasour’s, and never visited his Welsh castle, except for three weeks in the shooting season; during the remainder of the year, Mrs. Vavasour made ample use of a splendid library and grand piano, which he begged she would consider as her own; and these advantages were all

the assistance she obtained in educating her daughter. In this undertaking she had been, in many respects, very successful, but she had committed some mistakes ; and, as is most usual, she had erred more in the cultivation of Olinda's disposition than in that of her talents ; in fact, young ladies are taught with more care to play the piano, than to regulate their tempers, and it is less difficult to remember the chronology of the Roman history than to forget you have a pretty face. But the latter fact was impressed on Olinda's memory by her mother sometimes having the imprudence to remark it, and she had the further indiscretion to let her daughter know she thought her clever, and it will not therefore be considered as remarkable that Olinda brought a very favourable opinion of herself to town with her.

On the death of Mrs. Vavasour, somebody had suggested to Lord Portbury that it would be good-natured of him "to do something" for his uncle Vavasour's daughter, and it naturally

occurred to him that the best thing to do for a pretty girl was to show her.

Olinda came, and all the loose money which arose from the sale of the furniture and effects at the Welsh cottage was vested in a neat but not very splendid wardrobe, fashioned under the inspection of Lady Portbury.

This lady had been ill for a fortnight, consequently no strangers had been admitted, and this dinner was the first dawn of London society on Olinda's eyes. Her expectations were much raised when she entered the drawing-room with Lady Portbury. At the same moment the opposite door was opened, and the Duke of Desmond was announced.

Olinda had never seen or spoken to any man in her life except the curate of her Welsh parish, the apothecary, one attorney, and two farmers, and her intercourse with these chosen few had been extremely limited; she had therefore a very vague idea of what would be the appearance and manner of a distinguished

and agreeable man. She thought it not unlikely he would be tall and graceful, with black whiskers, and cheeks either cherry-red or deadly pale; that he would play the flute, speak pretty verses extempore; be very polite and obliging, and greatly addicted to making love, and that love the real, old, original, respectful, heroic love, that is more frequently read of in elderly novels than seen in young gentlemen.

The title of Duke, and euphonious name of Desmond, made her take the earliest opportunity of examining the possessor of both, but he possessed apparently few of the requisites for a hero; he was an awkward, middle-aged, heavy-looking man, with thin hair, that hesitated whether it should be green or yellow, like hay ill got in.

Next arrived MM. St. Mirval and Desottises, both belonging to the French embassy. The appearance of the first was rather promising; he was decidedly handsome and gentlemanlike;

but of M. Desottises there was no hope — he stammered and squinted.

Then came a viscount, and two barons, with Irish titles. All that could be said of these peers was, that had you gazed on them for four hours, and they had then quitted the apartments for one hour, it would have been hardly possible to have remembered which was which when they came back again.

Again the door opened for Mr. Preston Fleetwood. He looked sensible, and like a gentleman, but he was very dark, and slightly marked with the small-pox.

A cabinet minister, an Hungarian count, a young foreign prince, and two more Lords, completed the male ingredients of this party. Two foreign ladies, who were supposed to interest the prince and the count, and the wives of two of the peers, were the female guests.

The conversation during dinner was not particularly edifying. A discussion respecting the

mode of dressing a particular dish, the comparative merits of several cooks, of whose works some of the gentlemen had eaten and judged, were the leading topics. Afterwards, a singer, the quality of her voice, her features, figure, degree of estimation in Italy and France, salary, &c. &c. was treated of with a degree of earnestness very remarkable.

Upon the whole the culinary discourse seemed to elicit the deeper feeling of the company. But as the company was large enough to break into by-conversation, one of the Irish peers, who had the misfortune to be a project-monger, poured into the unwilling ear of his neighbour a plan for drawing an ardent spirit from the blossom of the blind-nettle, which liquor, like all newly-discovered messes, was to have the virtue of every medicine in the world. Another of the guests, who was cursed with a taste for landscape-gardening, described all he had done, and would do, to his place in the country.

Olinda was between these beaux ; and as the

staple of their conversation was addressed to their neighbours on the other side (except those civilities which a dining-table forces from gentlemen to the lady next them), her entertainment consisted, on the right, of a low murmur, bringing to her ear occasionally the words “shell—marle—clumps—rising ground—sunk fence—and fine effect.” On the left, “juice expressed—alcohol—quantity—proof-spirit—cooling astringents—wholesome,” with other terms delightful to a chemist’s ear, but affording little refreshment to those of a young lady. Olinda pardoned the brewer of blind-nettle—he was old, and had a sort of married look about the collar of his coat; but that excuse could not extend to the schemer in landscape—he was not ugly, and could not be thirty.

“How very rude smart men are!” said she mentally; “after all I cannot be so pretty as I imagined.”

She then turned her eyes and thoughts to the more distant members of the society, but

heard nothing very interesting. Some one at length began to speak of the fortifications of a town on the Continent ; a voice in reply quoted the opinion of M. Vauban, and in a tone so distinct and musical, that it caught Olinda's whole attention, and though all she knew of Vauban was, that he was an engineer, and of fortification the simple meaning of the word, she felt that the speaker was a clever man, and the only one in the room ; she perceived it was Mr. Preston Fleetwood.

The ladies rose, and soon proceeded to the Opera, with which Olinda was much delighted.

For the next six weeks Lord Portbury gave constantly two or three large dinners every week, eating and seeing eat being the principal pursuit of his life ; the intermediate days, if he did not dine out, he had two or three men at his table : and in this way his society was very various, for he cared more about what was on the table than who were round it ; and that more for the reputation of his

table, than for his share in its consumption. He had attained the *acme* of his ambition when he learned that an experienced gourmand had said, "that no man had such a cook as Portbury," or that his claret was the best in London.

He took the same interest in Lady Portbury's appearance that he had in his handsome service of gilt-plate—he liked to see his wife and dishes look bright. A handsome woman at one end of his table bore the same relation to the *coup d'œil* of the dinner as the plateau in the middle; and his taste in both did Lord Portbury honour.

In conversation he was a lavish proser, though talking principally at dinner, which he looked upon rather as a duty in a host.

Lady Portbury was several years younger than her Lord, very pretty and very vain; she had shed a few tears when her friends first advised her to marry Lord Portbury, but ardently wishing to be rich and great, she at

last made up her mind, and was afterwards agreeably surprised to find that being rich, and great, and handsome, were enough for her happiness: her business was to dress; her amusement to be admired. She was too young to wish for an admirer, to prove that she was still admirable; but she liked to occupy a good deal of time and attention, and to receive a certain portion of flattery, from those young men whose approbation was most prized at the time; but they were treated rather as courtiers than lovers, and came not “near enough to be denied.” In her female friends she only required rank and fashion, and did not dislike them for being her inferiors in moral conduct, if they acknowledged it by a tribute of submissive flattery.

From this pair, it may be supposed no opinion could proceed but what was most worldly and anti-romantic—consequently, most wholesome and improving for a mind just imported from Wales; and Olinda listened with respect

to all that was new to her, from a consciousness that she was now in a *terra incognita*—everybody appeared interesting, and everything a study.

Olinda had often thought herself comfortable, and even gay, when the red curtains were let down over the little parlour windows of her mother's cottage of an autumn evening, the fire blazed, the bright brass kettle boiled for their tea, when she used to sit down, with the appetite of fifteen, to the brown loaf and new-churned butter, after having filled the green china baskets with dahlias, mignonette, asters, and cluster-roses. Yet the evening promised no other entertainment than the company of the tabby-cat, the piano, some volumes of history or poetry, her work, or, the utmost stretch of dissipation, the arrival of the old curate, with a three days old London newspaper in his hand for Mrs. Vavasour, or some old book which he thought might amuse her daughter.

At the hour when that scene was displayed

in the cottage, in Grosvenor Square a flood of light was poured from the high gilt candelabra on Lord Portbury's dining-table, where the labours of his accomplished French cook were smoking for eighteen or twenty persons of fashion, the greater part of whom only ate to criticise, and experimentally as it were, few of the guests having in reality waited till half past eight in the evening ; but there is an *air de fête* on such occasions, which gives an idea such a party ought to be gay.

Olinda did not discover at first, that there is often more grace than cheerfulness, more good-breeding than good-will. One day Lady Portbury said, " There are a good many people to dine with us to-morrow, Olinda, and one person that will charm you ; there never was anything like Lady Montarran,—so graceful ! Oh, you will be delighted with her. And there will be Lord Portbury's sister, Lady Juliana Dixon, but she is a most shocking bore ; really, I always dread her visit. She stays a week,

and it seems to me like seven years. If it happened oftener than once a year, one must die of it—it is as much as I can bear.”

Olinda looked forward with some curiosity to the dinner, and followed Lady Portbury with observing eyes. The first persons that arrived were some of the gentlemen who were the most usual dining guests at the house.

Lady Juliana had arrived in the morning, and having retired to her dressing-room early, Olinda had not yet seen her, and now she entered, to the great surprise of those who knew she was near fifty, in a costume suited to a beauty of sixteen. She had been very pretty, arising from those advantages that belong to the very earliest bloom of youth; and before the usual time her slight figure grew angular, her smooth cheek hollow and pale, the bright profusion of fair curls had diminished to a handful, and even her friends and flirts owned that “Lady Juliana was quite *passée*.” Material changes take place every day, without being visible to those most

concerned in them, and to Lady Juliana alone were these mutations in her exterior as totally unsuspected as on the day she ran away with the late Colonel Dixon, just thirty years before she assisted at this dinner of Lord Portbury's !

Her scraggy form, instead of being wrapped in substantial *gros de naples*, or fat French satin, displayed the meagre insufficiency of white tulle ; her hair furnished five or six straw-coloured cork-screws, which were surmounted by a wreath of the palest blush-roses, mingled with jasmine, and her petticoat seemed to partake of the nature of Sir Caradoc's lady's "shrinking mantle," ere she had eked its length by the strange expedient of confessing her fault. Among the deficiencies of her toilette, a well-wisher might also deplore the absent tippet, and the trifling attempt at compensation set forth in a narrow blonde tucker !

Ere Olinda had obtained a satisfactory survey of this juvenile elderly, she was interrupted by the entrance of Lord and Lady Montarran : the

former looked dark, creditable, and statesman-like, had the reputation of a very sensible man, which few persons could contradict from their own observation, as in society his proportion of the conversation was confined to the occasional utterance of a deep hoarse "humph!" which sounded like "a clamour in a vault," and might be interpreted according to the construction the hearers made on his Lordship's emphasis; but Lady Montarran was grace and dignity personified—her long dark eyes beamed with an expression of sensibility and sweetness.

When Lady Portbury introduced Olinda to her, Lady Montarran spoke a few words of such cordial kindness, such graceful interest—her manner was at once so gentle and animated—that Olinda, who inwardly contrasted her salutation with the haughty bend, the cold carelessness of the other great ladies she had seen, could not help thinking she had at length met with perfection.

Lady Juliana, who had been speaking apart to

Lord Portbury, now advanced to pay her compliments to Lady Montarran, whose soft eyes sparkled as she took her hand, and exclaimed, “Dearest Lady Juliana, how very happy I am to meet you ! you cannot guess how grateful I am to Lady Portbury for giving me this opportunity of seeing a little of you. What an age it is since we last met ! and you are looking so well ! quite as lovely as ever ! absolutely girlish.

“Hey-day !” said Olinda to herself, “this charming person is certainly too partial to her friends ! though she seems to judge strangers so accurately !” for she could not bear to distrust her judgment, which had seemed so favourable to her.

A third female guest appeared in Lady Grimthorpe, and she did not make a very favourable impression ; she was short and thick, with a broad hooked nose, and much shade about her brow, which gave her gloomy countenance a sort of resemblance to a bullfinch in ill humour ; her movements were *brusque*, and she spoke in a

jerking objurgatory tone, which seemed enough to alarm a timid, and rouse a pugnacious spirit; however Olinda saw her received with the same placid and tranquil welcome as the preceding guests.

Perhaps nothing is more surprising to a novice in this world's ways than the inscrutable equality with which a well-bred hostess receives a large company, the members of which are of equal rank, but differing in degree of *agrément*; while to a company where the guests differ in rank there is a permitted and slight, but detectable, difference of reception and manner: and to execute this difference adroitly and gracefully is the most rare accomplishment of a distinguished hostess. At this moment I can recollect but four who reached the utmost point of address in this game.

Mr. Fleetwood was among the gentlemen; he usually dined twice or three times a week with Lord Portbury, but had latterly incurred Olinda's disapprobation, principally because he

conversed with the married ladies, and treated her, she thought, with peculiar disregard. She still saw he was clever, and liked to listen to him; but as she began to attract the notice of some other members of the society, it appeared due to her dignity as a belle, to be particularly reserved and cold to so refractory a beau, and he either did not see, or did not mind, this heroic line of conduct.

This party took place on a Sunday evening; they did not disperse to various assemblies, but some sat down to cards and others to converse. A fancy seized Lady Portbury to play whist, and wanting a fourth person for the table, she desired Olinda to sit down. She knew little of cards, and regarded with horror the proposition of joining in such an amusement on Sunday, but on Lady Portbury saying rather contemptuously, "Heavens! Olinda, what affectation! where is the harm? Is it not better than talking ill of our acquaintances?" (as if scandal was a necessary alterna-

tive for those who did not play.) Olinda hesitated, blushed, looked distressed and undecided.

Fleetwood was seated with his back to her, talking earnestly to Lady Montarran, and bending forward, suddenly turned his head and said, "What surprising weakness, Miss Vavasour! though this playing cards is an action entirely indifferent in my eyes, if you think it wrong it is wrong for you to do it; do not be laughed out of your opinion." Then rising, he entreated Lady Portbury's leave to join the whist-table, which was of course granted.

Olinda would have been grateful for the relief he had afforded her, had she not been displeased by the didactic manner in which his assistance was offered. And as people often are more offended at a deserved accusation than at one which their conscience assures them is unjust; perhaps a latent suspicion that she was too easily moved by sarcasm or entreaty,

made the reproach of Mr. Fleetwood more unpalatable than it might otherwise have proved.

When he joined the card-table, Lady Juliana sat down in the chair he had quitted, and said to Olinda, "I am so glad to find you are unsophisticated and hate cards; that is just like me, I hate all worldly occupations—give me roses, birds, and rural occupation, a few books—I can't live without books—the intercourse of intimate friends, and an attached lover."

Olinda thought it was time Lady Juliana should erase the last article from her catalogue of luxuries; perhaps she looked as if she thought so, for Lady Juliana resumed, "Of course I mean, as regards myself, a devoted husband, which in fact is the same thing, one whose attachment has the same intensity and freshness at the end of thirty or forty years, as when he was first subjugated."

“Subjugated !” exclaimed Lady Grimthorpe ; “nobody was ever subjugated for thirty or forty years, except *vi et armis*. Dear Lady Juliana, you will quite mislead Miss Vavasour, by this sort of doctrine, to expect such benignity and condescension from her husband, that she will be the most unhappy wife in Christendom if she believes you.”

“No,” said Lady Juliana, “I am sure she also will find her counterpart, and be as fortunate as I am ; persons who make the heart their guide acquire a sort of science of divination, that rarely allows them to mistake their road to happiness. That is the blessing of being what the world calls romantic.”

At this period of Lady Juliana’s discourse, all those who knew her best and were within hearing, were seized with the same sort of shuddering that Asmodeus felt when the conjuror recalled him to his bottle ; and the looks of those who had least mastery over their features expressed a sort of smothered reproach

to Lady Grimthorpe for drawing this eloquence forth, particularly as it seemed but the *entamure* of a disquisition that might run to length.

Lady Juliana had just arranged herself and drapery in an attitude that twenty-five years sooner would have displayed both to the greatest advantage, when a small rose-coloured note was brought her, and after looking at it she said, "I must go for an hour to poor Mrs. Harrington; I really have not seen her for five minutes to-day, and there is nothing more painful to me than to seem for a moment regardless of the call of friendship."

The rose-coloured call of friendship was reinforced by Mrs. Harrington's carriage, which bore off Lady Juliana. As she passed Lady Montarran, who seized her hand, and pressing it said, "Don't forget to come and see me, and remember to come up; I am always at home for *you*, and the people I love, though I am so quiet of a morning, and keep out the

crowd, but I shall be really angry if you do not come."

Lady Juliana vowed she would come the very next day, adding, "That her heart felt always more light near Lady Montarran, whose tenderness formed a sort of climate in which she breathed more freely."

Lord Portbury and one of his friends departed to Brookes's.

Lady Portbury having finished her whist, sat down by Lady Montarran, saying, "With what patience and good-humour you endure Lady Juliana's boring ways! really she is too dreadful!"

"Quite horrid!" replied Lady Montarran, in the same sweet quiet tone which had already captivated Olinda's heart; "she is much more silly than she used to be, or it is more apparent, from her having grown so much older; and it is so melancholy to see her looking so like the Witch of Endor in a wreath of roses."

"How I shall pity you to-morrow, Lady

Montarran; she will sit twenty ages, talking of love and friendship to you: why will you let her come?"

"Oh, I could not avoid asking her as an old friend, but I have long since desired that she might never be admitted upon any occasion whatever; you know I can't be rude and ill-natured, but she is such an infliction! and she looks so very ugly, perhaps from sitting by *you*."

"How good-natured you always are!" said Lady Portbury.

"Not *always*," thought Olinda: after a pause she said, "Since Lady Juliana avows herself to be romantic, how fortunate she is in having met with a person of the same way of thinking!"

"Of whom are you speaking, Olinda?"

"Of Colonel Dixon. Lady Juliana says——"

"Oh, my dear, that is one of her frenzies: he is a bluff vulgar Irishman, looking like the Great Mogul on a pack of cards, and whooping

like a chorus of boatswains ; he throws down all the china, and stumbles over every body whenever he walks across the room ; but you will see him, and then judge for yourself ; and you will *hear* him, *ce qui vaut mieux encore*, perhaps long *before* you see him ; for, when he talks in Cockspur-street, he's quite audible in Grosvenor-square ; and when he laughs !—oh !—One day in the Regent's Park, I thought it was some wild beast roaring from the Zoological Gardens, yet I believe he was not more near than North Audley-street."

The party soon broke up, and Olinda saw Lady Montarran's graceful and kind adieu, with something of diminished confidence.

CHAPTER II.

PEOPLE are not always eating or flirting even in London ; though the former is in many respectable persons' opinion the great business, and the latter the chief amusement of life. Our late King William, whose "glorious memory" begins to be forgotten, is said to have observed, that "clergymen imagined a soldier's sword always in his hand ;" and that "young ladies thought lovers were always making love :"—with regard to young ladies of very rural education, he might have added that they consider London as a great magazine for lovers,

where enough may be found for the whole female world.

Olinda soon discovered the abundance was not so striking as she had been disposed to think ; on the other hand, the abundance of pretty girls who sought them, (and with more diligence than Astarte looked for basilisks,) was remarkable. She began to think rather more humbly of her attractions, and forgave Mr. Fleetwood's insensibility, respecting his opinion rather the more for his disregard. Seeing him then as a man "out of the question" and constantly near her, they soon grew well acquainted.

Olinda perceived that almost all the rest of the society in which she lived were of very inferior understanding. During a short time, her total ignorance of the world veiled this discovery from her eyes, which naturally looked with respect at those who she concluded knew every thing she did not know. All the sub-

jects they discussed being those of the passing day, were entirely new to her, and consequently she felt how much she was wanting in their wisdom.

Of what use is it to be perfectly conversant with past history, if all your acquaintance remember nothing previous to the battle of Waterloo? You may have Moliere, Racine, and Shakspeare by heart, but they only think of the comedy that was performed for the first time last night at Covent Garden. You remember reading the poetry of Dryden, Pope, &c. "*mais nous avons changé tout cela.*" Roses, nightingales, and moons, helped by-gone poets to their similes; but every lawyer's clerk that addresses a sonnet to a lady's maid writes Gul—Bul-bul—and Phingari.

So Olinda found that all she had been taking so much pains to acquire, was entirely forgotten and unknown in the world. The very music she had hitherto played was too antiquated for the hand-organs in the street; and her situ-

ation seemed much akin to that of the celebrated sleeping beauty in the wood on rising from her five hundred years of slumber. She felt how provoking it was to be old-fashioned at eighteen years of age, and that it is easier to new-model your sleeves than your mind.

Another embarrassment was the mysterious cousinhood and propinquity that exist in the best society ; everybody being related to everybody, and branching off, and interweaving, like a flourishing bed of camomile. This, with the difficulties presented by the difference of names and titles, formed a science of such recondite profundity, that she was almost driven to the desperate expedient of committing the whole of Debrett's Peerage to memory.

It has been observed that she began to think more humbly of herself: it is necessary to remark, however, that she thought herself as pretty as before ; but other things, as rank, riches, and fashion had risen so much in her estimation, that beauty (unless when getting in

a plentiful crop of flattery) seemed of less consequence; and the talents that she once had flattered herself she possessed, seemed as little the current coin of those around her, as a purse full of cowries would be to the affable administrators of the treasures displayed at James and Howell's."

To shallow observers she appeared a remarkably gentle, modest girl, rather silent and timid; but Preston Fleetwood thought he saw a mine of vanity and ambition, of which the world would not fail to fire the train, and some talent, which the possessor still occasionally suspected to be of value. Still, he thought, "her vanity is acute, not chronic; of a sort that time, reflection, and the influence of better feelings, will hereafter repress, and but for evil example, and her peculiar situation, might not have ever been called forth." It seemed an act of charity to counteract the operation of all the silly opinions and false judgments she daily heard from others; and the exhibition of his good-

nature was the more readily performed, as the object was young, handsome, and listened as young gentlemen like to be listened to. But as Preston Fleetwood piqued himself on the disinterested motives which induced him to render this good office, and wished to make them apparent, lest Olinda herself should misconstrue them, he adopted a rough, epigrammatic, and ironical style of advice and observation, by which she was sometimes provoked, and often frightened.

Fleetwood was a young man of talents, and possessed a clear independent income of three hundred per annum. He was educated for the profession of spending money : his father was a banker, and failed, which obliged him to think of earning it, which requires both resolution and ability ; he exerted both, was called to the Bar, studied with diligence and success, and lived with strict economy, rarely went into public, and resolved to grow rich. As he was very agreeable, and his acquaintance did their

best to make him idle, he had many temptations.

He had seen a good deal of the world, and seen it, (as most indigent young men have an opportunity of doing,) the *seamy side without* : his heart was too large and generous to be narrowed by the view ; he felt the most perfect good-will to others, but he felt little confidence in their disposition towards him, and was hasty sometimes in forming unfavourable judgments of the motives of their actions ; but he saw misconduct in many ways, without expressing irritation, and his friends respected and feared his judgment, because he divined them ; and forgave his acuteness, because he rarely attempted to mend them. People who see a great deal, are very apt to think they see every thing ; the conscious possessors of great penetration sometimes find motives in others which do not exist : *on peut être plus fin qu'un autre, mais non plus fin que tous les autres*, and Mr.

Fleetwood did not keep this valuable truth always in mind.

“ Lord Sedley dines here to-day, Olinda ; you ought to make him fall in love with you somehow. I assure you, his uncle is just dead, he has forty thousand a-year, and looks as if he would marry somebody, if they would just put him in mind of it.”

“ Then I suppose,” said Olinda, blushing and laughing a little, “ that I am required to put him in mind of it.”

“ No doubt, Miss Vavasour,” said Fleetwood, “ and you should lose no time in making this important suggestion.”

“ Selina,” said Lord Portbury, “ his fortune is 37,000*l.* and not 40,000*l.* a-year.”

“ Well, Lord Portbury, it’s almost the same thing.”

“ Not at all ; one should always be correct in statements ; and I’ll tell you why I know ’tis 37,000*l.* a-year, and no more :—His tutor

was half-brother to Mr. Sidney—You remember Sidney, Fleetwood?—By-the-by, did you ever know a woman who squinted like his wife? And yet her sister was a pretty girl, and did not squint at all. I don't mean the sister that married Ravenshaw; for though she was pretty enough, *she did* squint. Yet she was *twice* married; for Ravenshaw died of an ague. Poor fellow! not that he would have died of the ague, I believe, if they had let him alone; but somebody persuaded him to take 'Fowler's Arsenical Solution,' the most dangerous medicine! But, indeed, so are all quack medicines: I cannot endure them. I would not let my dog swallow a quack medicine, except those pills, Juliana, that my grandmother, Lady Clandaffan, used to make a fuss about. Don't you remember? She even persuaded old Sir Sallensby Jones to swallow them; and yet he was more willing to swallow claret than pills. Capital claret, too, he

had at Castle-Jones. I wonder who hunts that country now. I had such a fall once at Castle-Jones!—But what was I saying? Oh! Sedley's rent-roll is——”

There is no knowing accurately how many times Lord Portbury might have lost the thread of his discourse, before he satisfactorily proved the amount of Lord Sedley's income. But all the relief the company by this time ardently desired, was obtained unexpectedly. There arose a noise in the lower part of the house, which gradually approached the drawing-room: doors clapped—boots creaked—voices hallooed—furniture fell—the lap-dog barked—somebody stumbled—somebody shrieked:—at last, the folding-doors opened, as Lady Portbury exclaimed,

“ If this is not an earthquake, or a band of marrow-bones and cleavers, it must be——”

“ Well, here I am, Lady Portbury; I hope you've been well since I had the pleasure

of seeing you last? I am glad to see you, Portbury. Juliana, my old girl, how goes it with you?"

This joyous greeting was spoken by a large, red-faced, but handsome-looking vulgar man, six feet four inches in height, whose face was fortified by bushy whiskers, as well as moustaches, and burnished by foreign sunbeams and domestic drink.

The vulgarity of a military man, who has really travelled and served, is seldom so oppressive as that which is home-brewed and natural; and the best thing that could be said for Colonel Dixon's manners was, that they might have been worse, had he flourished a "home-keeping" squire in his native county of Carlow. But he was a younger brother, and, from his sixteenth year, had not seen home for more than three weeks at a time, during the course of thirty years. Nay, he had seen less of Ireland than of almost any other part of the world; yet the tone, and

even the phrases, of that highly-favoured island, clung to his conversation as if he had but just left it.

Lady Portbury received him with languid civility and secret horror, her Lord with solemn courtesy, and Lady Juliana with demonstrations of surprise and expressions of joy, which seemed to Olinda less ardent than she expected, after all Lady Juliana had said on the subject of their mutual attachment and conjugal felicity.

The remainder of the morning passed quietly off. Colonel Dixon did not throw down above three of those "*fragiles merveilles*" which decorated Lady Portbury's drawing-room: it is true, his spur caught in her trimming, and divorced it from the gown rather roughly; and afterwards he attempted to sit on the arm of a chair, which broke off, of course. But the spectators most accustomed to his society seemed to think, that, upon the whole, his proceedings were unusually innocuous.

Nevertheless Olinda derived little satisfaction from finding herself seated next him at dinner. Lord Sedley was on the other side; and far from the coy pride of some of the beaux by whom she had been taken to dinner, and who afterwards seemed to regard her as if she had just rushed out of a lazaretto, he seemed much disposed to converse. He first confided to her his having purchased a turning-lathe, and dwelt on its price and praise. Then similar circumstances respecting an invaluable violin; nor did he forget to mention what were the tunes he could execute with the greatest prospect of success; for his science did not seem equal to his zeal in that delightful art: even in his most sanguine statement, it was plain that with him

“ Music, heavenly maid, was young.”

“ But there is one air, Miss Vavasour, I delight in — ‘ In a Cottage near a Wood ;’ it is so easy : now I am very fond of ‘ Ally Croker,’ but there are

two or three bars I cannot manage : then I was very anxious to play ‘ All the Blue Bonnets are over the Border,’ but really it is so hard ; every day, for the last six weeks, have I played and practised three hours a day, and I have not mastered the first part,—think ! not even the *first* part. Yet my music-master says he never saw a fellow with half my application, and that if I will but persevere two or three years, I shall completely beat Sir Frederick Pipewell. He is a great friend of mine, but he has no talent for music ; he has been nine months learning ‘ See the Conquering hero comes !’—now I can play *that* without looking at the notes, and one can do no more than practise half the day, and take lessons from the best masters in town. Monti gets three guineas a lesson ; *he* says I have more taste than ear, which is nothing, for one’s ear improves gradually by constant practice.”

Olinda civilly observed that Sir Frederick must be rather slow, and asked if Lord Sedley

had ever tried “Away with Melancholy?” adding the names of some other tunes which had been the first exercises of her musical education,—of which he earnestly besought her to write down the names, and soon grew so interested and amused by her conversation, that he could neither hear nor see any thing else.

His demand upon her as a listener was so unremitting, that Lady Portbury’s signal for rising would have been unnoticed but for everybody’s simultaneous move. At that moment her eyes met those of Mr. Fleetwood, which were fixed on her with an expression of scornful irony: they seemed to say—“So, Lady Portbury’s prudent counsel is not lost on you.”

Olinda blushed deeply, yet felt that Fleetwood’s eyes treated her unjustly. She had not thought of attracting Lord Sedley’s notice, but happening to sit by him, she had endeavoured, from civility, to talk of those things that might interest him. ’Tis true, finding that she had made herself agreeable, she wished to know

how much more so she could be in the estimation of this musical Cymon—a very usual curiosity in female minds. “How disagreeable,” said she internally, “to have so censorious a person as Mr. Fleetwood always at one’s elbow! I am glad he is not my brother, or——”

She slowly followed the matrons into the drawing-room. When the gentlemen came up-stairs, Lord Sedley came straight to Olinda, to consult her farther on his musical studies. He had hardly time to utter a sentence, when the uproarious approach of Colonel Dixon on the other side attracted the attention of the whole party: he, in a hoarse titter, exclaimed, “Well, Miss Vavasour, by Jove! I think you’ve done for my Lord Sedley, however! Well done, by Jove!”

Colonel Dixon’s whisper would have been audible over a much larger apartment than that which contained the party, who had the advantage of hearing it distinctly, except Lord Sedley, who was so intent to obtain Olinda’s coun-

sel, and examine her features, that the whole observation passed unheeded by him.

Olinda was very weary of her beau, and though Fleetwood never talked to her in a large party, or if other young men were present, yet this evening he stood with his back to her, talking of politics with some elderly man so earnestly, that nothing reached her ear but the word "government," and that so often that she wished for universal anarchy, that the subject might not be again discussed.

Before it concluded for the evening, Lady Portbury carried Olinda off to three assemblies, from whence she returned with her hair out of curl (for the night was wet), feeling cross, and looking sleepy, as well she might; for at each of the parties Lord Sedley had mounted guard, as it were, over her conversation, and did not give room for more than a bow from any other person whatsoever.

"Well, Olinda," said Lady Portbury, the

fifth evening of Lord Sedley's attendance, "I must say you are a lucky girl; Lord Sedley is quite attentive to you."

"It is because I talk to him of music," said Olinda sadly, "and he is music-mad."

"I beg your pardon, he seems quite fixed to your chair, even when Clara Barnby is by, and she is a beauty and an heiress, and I am sure would talk of a whale fishery if that amused him; and Lady Maria Winterton was quite out of humour last night, because he would not leave you: she said to me, 'Bless me, Lady Portbury, what *can* Lord Sedley find to say always to Miss Vavasour! I don't think her the least pretty, and after all, she is nothing to make a fuss about.'"

Olinda had heard the first part of her friend's speech with indifference, but when her foe was spoken of, (for such she reckoned Lady Maria,) her eyes lighted, and her attention was fixed. Lady Maria was absolutely such to Olinda on

all occasions, and she looked, whenever they met, as a sportsman looks at a poacher he finds in his preserve.

Lady Maria was envious and proud ; Olinda was vain, capable of jealousy, but not of envy ; and Lady Maria's disdainful glances and contemptuous manner gave her less displeasure, than a habit of conversing with Mr. Fleetwood, in which that young lady indulged, and would probably have made it a constant practice, could she have guessed that it annoyed Olinda, but of that valuable secret she was not possessed, and therefore only talked to Fleetwood because he was agreeable. She could not entertain any design on a man who was not a *grand parti*, but flirted, as a relaxation from the serious pursuit of Lord Sedley. She was handsome, at all times merry, and flattering when in a good humour ; and Fleetwood cheerfully accepted her notice without expecting or wishing for any thing farther.

Lady Juliana, the last day but one of her

visit to her brother, had insisted upon going to see the tombs in Westminster Abbey; Olinda had accompanied her; but Lady Portbury had been shopping, as she made it a rule, she said, not to go to *sights*. At dinner she enquired if they had seen any thing to recompense them for spending two hours in a damp cold church.

“Oh,” replied Lady Juliana, “I went as a sort of correction for the thoughtless dissipation into which London always seduces one, to call my mind home; I always go there just before I leave town.”

“By Jove! I wish you would go there when you first come to town, Juliana,” said Colonel Dixon, “and then, perhaps, you would spend less money in it, after your *correction*, as you call it. I’d like ‘to call your mind home’ before you have secured me a bill as long as my leg, from those fellows in Regent-street: but it is when the ‘steed’s stolen shut the stable-door,’ if you go poking among tombs when you have spent all your money.”

Nobody thought fit to notice this conjugal tirade. "A visit to the Cimetière of Pere la Chaise," said Fleetwood, "would not produce such a sober effect. The tombs are so gay, worldly, and dressed in that 'city of the silent,' that the dead seemed only to have hid themselves in a frolic."

"Yes," said Lady Portbury, "and the stiff garlands of everlastings they sell at the gate, only remind me how much better the artificial flowers are in the Rue St. Denis."

"Oh, Lady Portbury," exclaimed Lady Juliana, "must I always complain of your want of sensibility? But I am sure, Mr. Fleetwood, you will allow that some of the tombs suggest the most affecting associations?"

"Yes, some undoubtedly. For instance, I observed two enclosed burying-places adjoining each other. One of them was covered with garlands, urns full of flowers, and every variety of funereal decoration in use, but these had ceased to be ornamental; faded by the weather, it was evident that the hand which had placed

the wreaths long since had abandoned its cares. The adjacent grave was then, and seemed always to have been entirely neglected ; no visible mark of attention seemed ever to have been given to the withered grass that covered it. I asked the *concierge* the history of these tombs: he told me the decorated grave was that of an only child ; for eight months after its death the mother, in her “long despair,” came every day to deck its tomb—she was then placed beside it ! That child and she had probably been all to each other, and both graves had ever since remained uncared for.”*

“ Ah !” replied Lady Juliana, “ the next time I am at Paris, I will visit those tombs. How sad !—But, Mr. Fleetwood, tell me what other tomb made most impression on your mind. I was less *attendrie* than I expected, and had not time to observe everything, because I was obliged to hurry off to Madame Herbault’s about a bonnet.”

* Fact.

“ I think the next monument that struck me was one to the memory of the most gay and graceful profligate, C. Stanislaus de Boufflers, of whom one cannot say, ‘ *La natura si fece et poi ruppà la stampa*,’ because he was a repetition of Count Anthony Hamilton, perhaps the only writer who ever will resemble him. His tomb is not in itself remarkable: there is an air of gloom about it—a half-withered willow and some other tree kept the sun from shining on it, and his very name brings roses, gaiety, and sunbeams to one’s mind. I should never have looked for him in that grave.”

“ I have never seen his works,” said Olinda.

“ Most probably not: I should not recommend them to the instructors of youth: he is as immoral as witty.”

“ Faith, then, we have no loss of the fellow,” said Colonel Dixon.

Lord Portbury’s family, soon after Lady Juliana’s visit concluded, prepared for that annual migration from London, to which so

many heavy hearts and empty purses are condemned about the middle of July. As to Lord Portbury, whose existence was everywhere mechanical, if he went out of town at the usual time and in the usual way, he was contented ; but his wife was a good deal discomposed by a change which could not afford her any pleasure. In the country she could see but a few of those who composed her London society. Fanover Castle was a journey of two hundred miles, and a serious business to those whose interests and engagements kept them habitually near town.

Besides not seeing those whom she did like, she had the mortification of seeing a great many whom she positively disliked, but to whom she was obliged to be civil. Neighbours, relations, the host of anomalies that improvement drew about a great house, and the still greater host to whom the proprietor of a large estate is spell-bound by electioneering interests—all these were abhorred by Lady Portbury.

but at Fanover she could not escape them. Riding in the sun tans a fair complexion, so does walking; besides, it is fatiguing; so exercise is cut off, except an airing in an open barouche, or a little drive in a pony-chaise to the flower-garden.

She never quitted the house, but foreseeing this sedentary prospect, Lady Portbury brought with her a waggon load of every sort of material for ornamental work, silk, cotton, thread, purse-twist, foil, spangles, chenille, not forgetting canvas enough for the rigging of a three-decker, and a barrel of small beads, every sort of pattern for every sort of work, and every sort of instrument used in work. Her musical preparations were on the same extensive scale, and comprehended every song, quadrille, and sonata that had appeared that season, a new guitar, and a sack-full of harp-strings, and several musical boxes. Nor had she neglected to provide literary resources for her dreaded retirement, and had left the choice to an emi-

nent bookseller, who had furnished her with a quantity of novels, with such titles as the following:—"A Glance at the Season;" "Dukes and Duchesses;" "Last Opera Night;" "Tompkins Horner, by a Dustman;" and "Jubbins, or a Month at the Tread-mill:" there were some volumes of poetry prettily bound, particularly one in rose-coloured kid, entitled "Sprigs of Lemon Thyme:" then there was "The Lute of a Mourner," in yellow and gold,—all destined to dwell in the gay bookcases of the breakfast room at Fanover Castle, and very worthy of the undisturbed repose they would there enjoy.

The family arrived, and Olinda, as she beheld the splendid comfort of all the arrangements, wondered at Lady Portbury's listless indifference and frequent yawns. When she saw a profusion of interesting and valuable books, the most beautiful green-house plants, the comfortable and luxurious furniture, a fine collection of pictures, every table in the library covered with folios of valuable prints, the

beautiful grounds intersected with delightful walks, through woods of oak, beech, and lime trees, now in rich summer foliage, she was tempted to make the same exclamation (but in terms more polite) that the King of Scotland applies to Johnnie Armstrong and his train in the old Scottish ballad :

“ What wants this knave
That a king should have,
But the sword of honour and the crown ?”

“ I wonder you don't like this room, Lady Portbury,” said Olinda, as they passed the open door of the library.

“ Oh no, my dear ! it smells so of Russia leather, and carved oak looks so melancholy, and I never read the sort of books one finds there. When the house is full it is bearable, but not now. Just after I was married, I was sitting there one evening, Lord Portbury was absent, and I was reading ‘ The Bandit of Catalonia,’ I happened to look up at that horrid bronze gladiator, and it frightened me so, I was forced

to make my maid sit in the room all the evening, and to have two footmen stand outside the door. The pink-tent-room, next my dressing-room, is the only spot I like when we have not a party, for there I don't see the trees and the river, and I fancy myself in town."

Though few of Lady Portbury's advantages gave her much pleasure separately, she always spoke with pity and wonder, bordering on contempt, of those unlucky beings whose income did not at least reach 10,000*l.* a-year: to travel without four horses and outriders, not to eat off silver plate, appeared, in her eyes, both folly and vice; and so eloquent was she on this subject, that at times Olinda was tempted to think poverty sinful, and a voluntary offence against society.

Riches, however, have their drawbacks: in a few days commenced the predatory incursion of *the neighbours*, that dreaded horde of Vandals. Of course, they were kindly received,

and magnificently entertained. Among them were a chosen few who assisted Lady Portbury to laugh at the rest. An arduous task it proved; for, to the favoured minority, the erring majority seemed clothed in defects from head to foot. To the female critics, the costume of these unfortunates presented a wide field for abuse; but their manners and persons were not forgotten.

Lord Portbury talked pompously of turnips and ploughs to the elderly men, with many reflections on turnpike-roads, and some loose thoughts on bridges. To the young men he addressed observations on partridges, pheasants, and the locks of fowling-pieces: at least, these were the texts to which he had pre-engaged his oratory; but, as we have already seen, he was addicted to digressions: it must be owned, that there were few objects in art or nature of which he did not treat in each harangue.

He asked each young lady three times if

she had danced at the last county ball, and told each matron three long stories.

The rites of hospitality thus duly performed, had their effect on the minds of the obliged. The guests departed, agreeing that Lord Portbury was a very good sort of man, and “seemed to have a great deal to say.” The males loaded his cook with affectionate eulogy. All praised Lady Portbury’s beauty, grace, and clothing; and most of the young ladies boasted, that they carried off in their eye the exact shape and structure of her bonnet, tippet, &c. which was forthwith to be copied at home.

These scenes were enacted with several different parties, and then affairs mended. Some London friends were expected, which cheered Lady Portbury’s spirits exceedingly. Some few of the country acquaintance remained: among them, a distant relation of Lord Portbury’s, named Miss Boyd, and a young man of the name of Thoresby, the son of his tutor:

these persons were expected to pass some months at Fanover.

If Mr. Thoresby senior is to be judged by the benefit his pupil obtained by his tuition, perhaps a very high idea of his understanding and acquirements cannot be formed. But this is an unfair criterion. Those in the family who recollect, report him as fond of venison, greatly addicted to fishing, and very good-humoured. In consequence of a very good living his pupil obtained for him, he became an object of great attention to a number of middle-aged unmarried women in the neighbourhood; and one who was the most notable, effective, and literary of the set, became Mrs. Thoresby, and the next year a mother and a widow! Luckily, she was shortly after to obtain a comfortable independence by the death of a relation. She educated her only son herself, and, as she boasted, with extraordinary success. He was in joining-hand at three years old, had all Gay's fables by heart at four;

and all the neighbourhood said, "Little Thorresby was a prodigy, and a very pretty boy."

Time tries all things: the flaxen, curling hair, white skin, and red cheeks, that made him so pretty at five, were less becoming at twenty-five. In fact, he looked effeminate as a man, and his accomplishments were not exactly those usually displayed by the "browner" sex. He played on the piano-forte and the guitar, and accompanied them with his voice, which, though weak, was agreeable. He painted feathers, shells, and flowers, for all the albums whose proprietors declared "They must have some pretty thing by Mr. Thorresby." He wrote monodies on all the parrots and canary-birds that died; and odes, sonnets, and Anacreontics to all the young ladies he was introduced to. As he was in easy circumstances and delicate health, he was so long in choosing a profession, that, at last, he found out he was not equal to the fatigue of active life: so he spent his life most inoffensively

in rhyming, singing, botanizing, and screen-making; also a sort of small, subdued attention to the young ladies, that did not amount to *love*, but might be called *sentiment*-making.

It will be plain, from this description, that Mr. Thoresby was a very nice young man, and “very pleasant in a country house;” Lady Portbury found him so useful in entertaining her female guests, and doing the honours to them; Lord Portbury had been used to him, and liked him for his old tutor’s sake; and all these causes combined to make him a fixture during the summer season at Fanover Castle, and to give old Mrs. Thoresby the triumph of saying to the awe-struck members of her whist-table, “Lord and Lady Portbury can’t live without my Sam. I assure you he’s the life of Fanover Castle.”

When Olinda first saw Lucy Boyd, she only beheld in her a neat, plain girl, who would have had a pretty figure, had not short legs and a large head produced that peculiar vul-

garizing effect that these faults always operate on the human form. Her features were common, her complexion muddy ; but she had fine dark eyes, full of intelligence ; a pleasant expression of countenance, and brilliant teeth. Those who looked at her often soon grew to think her handsome, or (if that is too strong a word) very pleasing.

Her mother having made a *mésalliance*, died in poverty ; and Lord Portbury allowed the daughter a small annuity, and proposed to Lady Portbury to take her with them to London ; as, however, next to poverty, there was no greater defect in that lady's estimation than absence of beauty and fashion in the exterior, she decided that Lucy was too ugly and vulgar-looking to go about with her in town, but she had no objection to her being with them in the country ; so Lucy spent her summers at Fanover Castle, and in the winter (or rather that part of the year which, by the courtesy of the London public, is called

so) she lived with the vicar and his wife, to whom Lord Portbury paid a yearly stipend for this accommodation.

Young ladies soon grow intimate ; and Lucy was so sensible, good-humoured, and quiet, that Olinda grew to make a friend of her. One day, when Olinda was expressing pleasure at the expected arrival of some of the society that in London she had found most agreeable, she described some of those guests to Lucy, who seemed amused and interested by her account of them.

“ By the by, Lucy, do not you find your winter society at the vicarage very dull ? ”

“ Why no ; but it can hardly be called a society, you know, we live so retired ; yet it is very comfortable. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson are very fond of and kind to me, and I am always busy.”

“ But being occupied is not always being amused ; do tell me how you pass your time.”

“ Well, we breakfast at nine ; afterwards, I

spend three hours in my own room, working and reading grave books; then I take a very long walk, sometimes with, sometimes for, Mrs. Johnson. She sends me with physic, or clothes, or advice, to the poor parishioners. Sometimes we visit our very few neighbours, or I walk for mere pleasure, or work in the garden. Then we work for a charitable bazaar, till we dine at five; or, three times a week, I have two poor children to teach, whom I educate."

" You educate !"

" Oh, only in 'reading, writing, and needle-work. Then, on Sundays, between the services, I teach the Sunday-school; then we drink tea at seven, and some persons come now and then to drink tea with us and spend the evening, which concludes at half-past ten."

" And are any of the visitors tolerable ?"

" Oh dear, yes ! three are pleasant ; I cannot say so much for the rest."

" And who are the pleasant three ?"

“ Captain Clithero and his wife. He has travelled a great deal, and is an agreeable old man: his wife is much younger, and a nice creature: he plays backgammon with Mr. Johnson, and she and I work and talk with Mrs. Johnson, or one of us sometimes reads an amusing book aloud. And—and—there is a man—a young man—who is pleasant.”

“ A young man ! upon my word, I am glad to hear it, for your sake, Lucy. I was afraid Captain Clithero was *pour tout potage* in the society. Who is your young man ?”

“ Why, Lady Portbury or you would hardly count him as one; for I have observed that you both reckon only fine people: now Mr. Watson is only a curate.”

“ Take care, Lucy, however, that you do not fall in love with this pleasant curate, for he would not be a fit match for you.”

“ Olinda, may I say what I please ?”

“ Yes, surely.”

“ The reason I ask is, that though you are

a beauty, and I an ugly girl, there is a great deal in common to both our situations : yet as young minds are often formed by circumstances, and our destinies

“ Shape our ends, rough-hew them how we will,”

it may not be useless for you to hear what I have felt and think ; because my experience is quite different from yours ; and from some observations I have made, I think the opinions of those you live with seem to influence you too much ; your heart and mind are differently constructed from theirs, and the same fate would not satisfy you.

“ When I came here six years since, I was of your age, and my feelings and expectations perhaps much the same, when I discovered that my want of grace and beauty condemned me to the vicarage, instead of being a smart Miss in London. I was excessively vexed and humbled. I had spent the summer at F'anover, and had seen just enough of society to give me a wish to see more : the thought

of living among inferior people ; the discreditable prospect of being an old maid, grieved me deeply. My first two months at the vicarage were spent in reading novels, doing a little satin-stitch, with intervals of yawning and regret, and I am now ashamed to say, *de tems en tems*—a few tears.

“ Mrs. Johnson, who observed my unsatisfactory mode of passing the time, at last said, ‘ My dear, this place, I know, must be very dull for you after Fanover Castle, and the time passes heavily ; but this disagreeable consequence of retirement after dissipation is increased by the want of employment. Will you adopt a plan of my proposing? if you do not find that it renders your solitude less irksome, give it up at the end of three months, and pass your time in any way that appears more likely to produce the same end.’

“ This request appeared so moderate, I was ashamed not to comply with it. Mr. Johnson gave a list of historical and religious works

and books of amusement which he thought would conduce to my improvement. I did a great deal of needlework for myself and for the poor; and I had the pleasure of learning that much good may be done to the lower classes without money; that she who has little of that to bestow,

‘ May with her counsel and her hands relieve.’

I assisted Mrs. Johnson to look after the house; I worked in the garden; I never was idle.

“ At first all this did not amuse me; on the contrary I was what Lady Portbury calls *bored* with the whole thing, but I was too busy to mourn and fret over it. At the end of three months, I was contented; and though my mind had a little relapse the second autumn that I spent at Fanover, at the end of three years I was happy, and convinced I was never intended for the *beau-monde*.

“ Six years have now passed, and though I am often amused here, I go back to the vicarage with more pleasure than I leave it. I am

suffered here, *there* I am loved,"—here Lucy blushed and hesitated,—“ yes, I will not deny it, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson love me as their own child, and I am beloved by a sensible and good man ; I hope to spend my life with Mr. Watson when he has enough to begin housekeeping, which he will have when he gets a small living he has been promised.

“ You have now, Olinda, a ‘ full account of my life and conversation ;’ perhaps a little too much of the last. But now to the view of your affairs and the application of my history.

“ Here you are, a beautiful girl, in the first society ; admired in your presence ; when you quit the room, somebody says, ‘ That Miss Vavasour is *so* lovely ! she is *sure* to make some great match !’ How often does Lady Portbury herself begin a speech with ‘ Olinda, when you are married to Lord Somebody, you must do so and so.’

“ It is not improbable these auguries may be fulfilled, but if they are, it is ten chances to

one that the Lord who (according to the estimation of this world) does a foolish thing, is a man with whom you will like to spend your life ; and a *great* choice of *great*, matches it is highly improbable you will have. I know you enough to see, that you would not be happy with a disagreeable oaf ; but what are the alternatives ? To remain single, with the habits and tastes you must acquire in your present circle, on a pittance too small to procure more than the necessaries of life. Now when you are young, new, and admired, this presents nothing very disagreeable ; but when you are no longer so situated, can you not foresee that this would prove a most comfortless fate ?

“ Do not then, my dear Olinda, think it necessary to be great, if among the many who will love you, you should find one likely to make you happy ; do not be afraid of narrow fortune and retired life ; I am sure you would be happier so circumstanced than with the richest fool you ever saw.”

“My dear Lucy, I do entirely agree with you,” said Olinda, laughing, “but I am amused with your thinking that it is likely to be in my choice to be a great lady. I have already seen enough of the world to know that men dance with girls because they are pretty, but they do not marry them for that reason. I would not marry a foolish man upon any account. I have not seen anybody, rich or poor, I should like to marry, and am rather touched by your picture of my state of old-maid-ism hereafter, which, of the three lots, I fear, is that which I am most likely to draw.

CHAPTER III.

FANOVER CASTLE was now completely full, with a party exactly suited to the taste of its mistress. The company consisted of those whom Olinda had been in the habit of seeing most frequently in Grosvenor Square.

Among these were three or four young men of fashion, whose admiration was considered the property of married ladies only, but infinitely valuable, as conferring a sort of distinction on the reputed possessors thereof. A portion of these much-prized notices had been given to Lady Portbury, who, though she would not accept or hear a declaration of love, was rigid in demanding admiration from them all. As

much attention as they could spare from pursuits more fully rewarded, Lady Portbury obtained, and had no mind to part with.

When these gentlemen were assembled at Fanover, some of them were rather in want of occupation, as being removed from shrines where their vows were habitually paid, and from clubs where their leisure was principally spent.

What was to be done? they could not *all* talk *all* day to Lady Portbury and Lady Montarran; nobody wanted to talk to Lady Grimthorpe; most of the other ladies were patient hearers to some of their friends. In short, the supply of beaux was greater than the demand: a very unusual and critical circumstance.

In this disette of belles, Lord Frederic Danesford and Sir George Hanbury discovered that Olinda was remarkably handsome, and each took an early opportunity of hinting the discovery to its object; further than this cautious intimation, they did not mean to go, each purposing that his admiration should evaporate in the

last hour he spent at Fanover. Meanwhile to reimburse themselves for such flattering condescension to a *Miss*, they endeavoured to derive as much amusement from her company and conversation as might be found in them.

Olinda knew enough of these gentlemen by reputation, to be aware that their gallantry meant nothing, but that their notice was very flattering, as they never talked to girls; she was well pleased at being so much admired, and listened very graciously. Both the gentlemen were very agreeable, and spared no pains to make her think so.

The first interruption of the general felicity proceeded from the coldness and displeasure which Lady Portbury showed towards Olinda; she frequently found fault with her, and not unfrequently talked *at* her,—a process which never fails to try the patience of its victim to the quick. After vainly trying to appease Lady Portbury by attending to all the reprehensions she received, Olinda at length hit upon the

discovery that the real cause of anger was not the ostensible one ; and a little reflection and observation enabled her to see what was the real cause.

Nothing could exceed her anxiety to get rid of the attention which had cost her the goodwill of her friend. In London this could easily have been accomplished ; but in a country-house, where parties fall into little knots, they are apt so to continue till new arrivals break the spell.

All the party by this time seemed to consider the place on each side of Olinda at dinner as sacred to Lord Frederick and Sir George ; and if any tardy and shy squire arrived too late to take up a position considered as common to all at the dinner-table, and by accident shuffled towards either of these chairs, a significant look from a friend, recalled him to a fresh struggle through the footmen, rather than separate those whom "love had knit, and sympathy made one," apparently. Olinda could not seize the

retreating intruder.—If she sat down to the piano, in a moment she was between these assiduous supporters, and all the men stood aloof. Olinda could not say come and listen to me.

Among the latest aids London had afforded the party, was Mr. Fleetwood. He arrived late, and coming after the dinner party were seated (for Lord Portbury never waited for any one), on entering he perceived Olinda with a vacancy on each side. She looked up with a smile of earnest welcome, and he acknowledged the force of the invitation by coming round, and preparing to seat himself at her side. An almost imperceptible look from a man on the opposite side of the table rebuked him, and after a momentary greeting he sat down at some distance.

Another of the guests entered, and just as he was taking possession of the long-vacant chair, he saw it was next Olinda, and took another.

A minute afterwards arrived Lord Frederick, who took it with an air of proprietorship, which

was not lost upon Fleetwood, and which was repeated by Sir George Hanbury.

Olinda, who, for some weeks previous to her quitting London had involuntarily devoted a part of her time to deciphering the expression of Fleetwood's face, read there "strange matters," which did not, however, by any means help "to beguile the time," but rather to make her uneasy situation become still more uneasy.

In the evening when the whole company were assembled, she saw Fleetwood advance to pay his compliments to Lady Portbury, and as they were conversing, she saw Lady Portbury spoke of her, and disapprovingly. She was not near enough to discover what was said. Fleetwood came not near the whole evening.

"Yes," said Olinda, when she pulled the rose out of her hair at night, "Lucy Boyd is right — fine society is odious. I wish *I* lived at the vicarage among the Clitheros and Johnsons, where anybody may sit by anybody. I

wish *I* loved a curate." In this state of humble discontent she retired to rest.

It may appear surprising that Lady Portbury, who had seen with much pleasure the attentions Lord Sedley had paid to Olinda in town, should have taken those of Lord Frederick and Sir George so much to heart in the country, particularly as she piqued herself upon the correctness of her own conduct, and did not care for either of these men. The fact is, she was willing that Olinda should marry well, on condition that she was not raised above herself. To a viscount or baron, who was neither better-looking or richer than her own lord, she was welcome; but a higher degree in any respect would not have met with her approbation. She would have rejoiced to see all the opulent squires within three counties love Olinda, but two of the finest London men ought not to look at an inconsiderable Miss when *she* was present.

As the gentlemen had risen early, (at least

those whom Olinda now desired to avoid,) and had accompanied Lord Portbury in some excursion, she came, soon after she had ascertained their departure, into the breakfast-room, and sat down to read Madame de Staël's "*Allemagne*;" that is to say, she held a volume of that very entertaining work in her hand, but it may be doubted whether she derived much amusement from its perusal, because, about twenty minutes after she began to read, she perceived the book was upside down. Lady Portbury always breakfasted in her own room, and the other ladies were late, except Lucy Boyd, who had already retired, therefore Olinda's studies were not likely to be interrupted, when she was surprised by the entrance of Mr. Fleetwood.

"How is it, Miss Vavasour," said he, "that I am so fortunate? I should have supposed that you had joined Lord Portbury's expedition to-day, with a hawk upon your wrist, like the ladies of olden time."

“ And why, Mr. Fleetwood, did you give me credit for such activity ?”

“ Why, not seeing either the Topaze or Ebene of your memoirs, the two genii who usually accompany you, I could hardly believe it is you. May I ask why these divine beings have deserted their post ?”

“ Most young ladies would say, ‘ Whom do you mean ?’ but to save trouble and questions, as I suppose you inquire after Lord Frederick and Sir George Hanbury, I reply that they have gone with Lord Portbury.”

“ Since you admit their office, perhaps you will allow me to inquire which is considered as the good genius ?”

“ Their merits are so equal in my eyes, that I cannot possibly decide, but in one respect I do not resemble Rustan. I never miss either of my genii when they are absent.”

“ Will you think me very impertinent, if I wonder that objects so indifferent should acquire such privileges when present ?”

“ No. I rather wonder how we became such a trio of friends. I am sure, if it was my fault, I most heartily repent of it. Just before you came into the room, I was considering how it happened ; and I really believe it is because they have nothing to do that they talk to me ; and then at first I was pleased that two such magnificent beaux should find leisure to flatter me ; then the whole society oblige me to sit with them all day long, by flying from us. How shall I repair my folly ? ”

Olinda spoke with the eagerness she felt, to justify herself in Fleetwood's eyes ; perhaps he discerned that motive, and it did not displease him. To any one of generous feelings, extreme frankness (even when it lays open faults and follies) is touching, particularly from a person generally reserved ; it is also catching, and he who confesses to his friend that he is guilty of petty larceny, is very likely to hear of a murder in return.

Fleetwood saw that she had not been angling

for Lord Frederick and Sir George. Their conversation was long and animated: it ended by a promise on his part that he would always liberally supply her with his advice and opinion on her conduct; she promised she would not be offended if it was sometimes expressed with less courtesy than *brotherly* sincerity."

N. B. The word "brotherly" was used by Fleetwood, because he considered himself as the most prudent and disinterested friend a young woman like Olinda could meet with. Each paid the other some compliments, and the lady grew a little embarrassed, and the gentleman's expressions were complimentary and confused. Towards the close of the conversation, and by mistake, he called her once or twice "Olinda," instead of "Miss Vavasour," yet she did not appear offended by the inadvertence.

Lady Grimthorpe at one door, buttered roll and hot coffee at another, for her accommodation, closed the colloquy.

Nothing is more frequently proposed by idle

and disinterested gentlemen to pretty young ladies who have no parental dragon at their elbow, than the friendly compact above described ; and I beg my reader to depose upon oath how long he or she has ever known it to endure without the gentleman making love.

At dinner, when Olinda beheld her usual neighbours safely lodged on her right and left, she (having had the precaution to put on a gauze scarf) complained of a sore throat, and the open windows, saying to Lucy, who sat opposite, “ Dear Miss Boyd, I know you do not mind air : I have got such a cold ! do change seats with me.”

Lucy, who was already warned of her intention, immediately transferred herself to Olinda’s seat, who took that she had occupied. As Lucy’s neighbours previously had been Colonel Dixon on one side, and Mr. Spriggins, Lord Portbury’s agent, on the other, such self-immolation on the part of Olinda appeared, to such of the guests who observed her migration, as a proof

of quinsy, and to the dandies she had quitted as a proof of frenzy.

Colonel Dixon rubbed his hands, exclaiming in an audible and hoarse whisper, "*Amantium iræ amoris*," &c. which is a favourite Latin quotation with those who possess no other.

Mr. Spriggins suffocated a smile. Lord Frederick and Sir George kept a dignified silence, and averted their look from Lucy, according to the most approved rule of behaviour for Englishmen, when the lady next them is neither beautiful, rich, nor great. To Miss Boyd, all that passed at Fanover had long served as a pageant, amusing enough to see, but in which she was entirely unconcerned on her own account, and only "mute and audience to the act."

In the evening Olinda entrenched herself so ingeniously behind Miss Boyd, that neither of her pursuers could approach, and Fleetwood lent his aid and protection by talking to them the greater part of the time.

The next day an influx of company, including some married belles, produced a change in their positions at dinner, and a diversion of the attack; and as, when a woman really wishes to get rid of attentions that are displeasing, she rarely fails in effecting it speedily, in a few days Olinda succeeded on this occasion.

Fleetwood grew more attentive, recommended books, heard and corrected her opinions on them, and on the society at Fanover. Several articles were added to the treaty they had already concluded; one, in particular, which deserves notice. This was proposed by Fleetwood, to convince Olinda and himself of his disinterested good will, and caught at by her, that she might seem to put no other construction on his attentions. It was this—that he should give his frank opinion on all the acquaintances and admirers Olinda should acquire, warn her against indiscreet female companions, recommend those who were estimable, and exercise a similar privilege with regard to her ad-

mirers; and he further volunteered a promise that, when one should appear worthy of her affection, he would enquire into his character and examine his disposition with the anxiety of a *brother*.

A rage for fraternity seemed to possess him in these conversations, which grew longer and more interesting every day. Every day he said to himself, "If I can correct her propensity to coquetry; if I can counteract the contagion of evil example, and arrest the growth of worldliness, with so much spirit and intelligence, and so good a heart, she will be perfect!"

Olinda also had a little diurnal soliloquy, "What a pity that Lord Sedley has not the talent, the kind heart, the fine eyes of Mr. Fleetwood! What a pity Mr. Fleetwood is not Lord Sedley! After all, why are not poor people as likely to be happy as the rich?" Then she thought of the cottage where her youth was spent; she saw a kind of vision of Fleetwood sitting by that fire-side, reading to her while she

worked. The vision grew more distinctly portrayed to her “mind’s eye:” he was reading by the light of two tallow candles! no gilt candelabra were there! her gown was stuff! Then she cast her eyes on the glass, and contemplating her own graceful figure, then displayed in white silk—“ *This* would not be seen to much advantage in stuff, — the Curate our only visitor! and he would not know whether I was pretty or not: it *is* disagreeable not to have justice done to one’s natural advantages, if they are ever so trifling—Nonsense, conceit — what a fool I am.”

Lucy told her one day, that Mrs. Johnson, being ill, wished to have her at the vicarage for a couple of days, and was to send Mr. Johnson’s pony-chaise for her the next morning. “ Mr. Watson will come for me, Olinda, and you say you are curious to see him, yet you probably will not like him, for he is quite different from all the men I have heard you praise.”

Olinda *was* curious to see him ; Lucy had told her a number of little anecdotes, which had given her a respect for his character, and a high opinion of his heart.

She was early in the breakfast-room, whither Lucy also repaired in high spirits ; and soon after Mr. Watson entered the room. He was what the common people call a *comely* young man, but ruddy, stout made, and rather vulgar-looking, with a slight provincial accent ; civil, unembarrassed, and unpretending, consequently there was nothing to laugh at ; but evidently, as Lucy had said, very unlike the men Olinda generally saw.

In this world of *seeming*, a man who is content to *be* what nature and education have made him, is always respectable, even as giving a proof that he is conscious he need not be ashamed of himself. Of course, from this rule we must except those who are always revealing their identity from vanity.

The pair departed after breakfast in the

pony-chaise; but before their retreat was effected, some of the rest of the inmates of Fanover had entered the room, and Lady Maria Winterton looking out of the window at the pony-chaise said, "Oh what a machine is here! Did you ever see any thing like it? Whose is this, for pity's sake!"

Lucy, without being disconcerted, replied,

"It is a friend's carriage come for me."

Lady Maria, who having no occasion to envy Lucy was always well-bred to her, was probably sorry to have made the comment.

Lucy and her lover being out of hearing, the party indulged in some mirth at their equipage; and Olinda felt that, were she in Lucy's place, she would have felt some mortification on this occasion. What passed in her mind was not unperceived by Mr. Fleetwood; and the first moment they were alone, he said, "Confess, Miss Vavasour, that you pitied your friend Miss Boyd for having so shabby a carriage, and so rural a lover."

“ Why do you suppose me so trifling as to take these circumstances more to heart than Lucy herself ?” said Olinda, colouring a little.

“ I do not notice the fact as blaming your feeling, but I may perform a service by calling your attention to it. It is of the last importance that you should understand what your *real* tastes are.

“ Young ladies in general think they have, or affect to have, a thorough contempt for the “poms and vanities” of life, as arising from the possession of rank and wealth. Sometimes they think they appear amiable by such professions; sometimes they do not know enough of the world and themselves to be aware how far rank and wealth might operate in producing their happiness; and sometimes they repeat like parrots what has been said to or read by them. Now, if a woman who had unadvisedly chosen to live in a cottage, travel in gig, and eat mutton-chops with a man she thought she preferred to all mankind, should suddenly discover

that she pined to inhabit a palace, and rule an establishment like Lord Portbury's; even with a partner less congenial, if she found herself discontented and ashamed of the economical *tout-ensemble* to which she had bound herself for ever, do you not see that she has committed a fatal mistake?

“ On the other hand, if a woman who could not bear to live with a husband of inferior mind, of unsuitable disposition, one whom she could not love and confide in, should, from *prudence* (commonly so called), or the persuasion of friends, or any other artificial motive, seek the opposite destiny, her error would be still more fatal to her happiness, perhaps to her character; inasmuch as she would lose more by her mistake, and possibly seek to repair it by dangerous expedients.

“ I repeat then, Miss Vavasour, it is of the last importance that a young woman should ascertain *which*, if the two lots are in her choice,

would *really* be most conducive to her happiness, and decide accordingly."

There was something excessively grating to Olinda in this harangue, which Fleetwood delivered without vehemence, in an even tone, which seemed to announce him quite uninterested in the result of his exhortation.

Olinda had not had sufficient intercourse with her fellow-creatures, or was herself too much flurried, to make an observation that would, perhaps, have been a comfort to her heart, or her vanity, whichever had been wounded in the dialogue.

It is this: if in conversation not vehement enough to excite sudden inflexions of voice, a person all at once raises or lowers his by a just perceptible degree, and so continues to speak, he is either lying, or more interested in what he is saying than he is willing to show. It was thus with Fleetwood during his address to Olinda; though he spoke in a calm and mea-

sured tone, his voice was two or three notes higher, and a sort of huskiness came on; his cheek, which was always pale, became still paler.

Olinda recollected that she had authorised her monitor to give advice, and therefore could not take it amiss; she was therefore contented to reply in as disengaged a tone as she could command, that she agreed with him entirely, everybody ought to reflect long on their own feelings ere they decided their fate.

Fleetwood's manner for the remainder of that day was more formal, and he talked less to Olinda than he usually did. She thought him unreasonable, nor was this the only occasion on which he appeared so. While professing only the interest of a friend, he sometimes usurped a privilege they do not claim; he not only decried those gentlemen whose minds and manners made him judge them as disadvantageous friends or flirts for Olinda, but he insensibly grew to disapprove of her talking much to any

man ; and the more distinguished by natural advantages or those of fortune the person was, the more full of admonition and discontent was Mr. Fleetwood.

As Olinda had a natural disposition to coquetry, this was a restraint extremely disagreeable to her ; but she had also a great wish to please Fleetwood, and a great reliance on his judgment, so she bore the tyranny with becoming resignation. One day when he had shown a good deal of disapprobation, on some occasion he left the room ; Miss Boyd and Olinda were alone in it. After a pause, Lucy said,

“ What shall you do with that man, Olinda ? He loves you—in a sort of a way, and he is jealous—in a sort of a way. I used to think if you could put the House of Lords out of your head, and be contented in privacy and poverty, you might be very happy with him ; for he has not only the *huckaback* merit which would satisfy *me*, but the manners and

habits which might satisfy *you*. But then I begin to see he is so whimsical, and absolute, and suspicious, that it will not be an easy matter to satisfy *him*. What will you do?"

"What can I do? You are mistaken, he does not care a straw for me, he has almost told me so more than once; and I think I am glad of it, for certainly his temper is very strange."

Had her own been perfectly composed, this declaration would not have been sincere; but at this moment Olinda thought she spoke the truth.

Lucy shook her head. "Whether your liking is lasting or not, I will not pretend to say; but hitherto he has taken up more of your attention and preference than any other man I have seen at Fanover."

What Olinda was going to reply has never transpired, as Mr. Thoresby just then entered the room, evidently elated, and holding a small parcel in his hand.

“ I wish to make you a little confidence,” said he: “ I have just received this gift, anonymously of course, or I should not think myself at liberty to show it ; I really can’t guess whom ’tis from, or how I have deserved it.”

After undoing several folds of silver paper, he produced a blue satin portfolio, with a bouquet embroidered in beads on one side of it.

“ The industrious and enamoured female embroiders well,” said Lucy.

“ Enamoured ! oh fie, Miss Boyd,” said Mr. Thoresby, simpering. “ But I wish you both to aid me in guessing who has been so very good:—though nothing is so common as ladies presenting little pieces of work, you know — purses for instance ; yet this seems completed with so much care—I can’t help thinking——”

“ Oh, I know what you can’t help thinking ; could it be Lady Maria ?”

“ Oh no, impossible !” replied Mr. Thoresby, evidently much pleased at a suggestion that

appeared as probable to him as ridiculous to his audience.

“Well then, *I’ve* guessed. Do you remember that handsome Miss Dawson, who they said would be so rich?”

“I hardly remember,” said Mr. Thoresby musing, and trying to look sad with all his might; “but my habitual melancholy and abstraction prevents me often from improving the most agreeable acquaintance. Yes, I think I remember — a very pretty heiress. Somebody was good enough to present me — I can’t think where.”

“I am sure she would be very much mortified and disappointed if she heard you, Mr. Thoresby,” said Miss Boyd, “for you seemed excessively lively and agreeable that evening, and danced the whole night.”

“Perhaps I might, I have great self-control at times; but the heart has no share in these things—

‘The heart, the heart, is lonely still!’

The other night, when Lady Portbury made me sing the whole evening, and play Loo, I felt exactly like Atala when she describes herself ‘*haletant après l’ombrage et appelant à grands cris la solitude.*’ ”

The young ladies listened with delight to Mr. Thoresby’s account of his feelings, because they recollected that on the evening alluded to he had sung and talked the whole time, and giggled incomparably more than the whole society put together ; and his red cheeks and round blue eyes were in singular contrast with his professed melancholy and sentimental conversation. Both his listeners, however, thought it would be unkind to deny his having appeared in low spirits, so continued silent ; and after two deep sighs Mr. Thoresby said he wished to show them some lines which he had written in return, and meant to send the anonymous donor, when he should discover her. “ And pray, Miss Vavasour, criticise freely. Miss Boyd, I beg you will be frank : these trifles

that are written with ease are generally full of faults; one's reputation does not rest upon them, you know."

He then produced three sheets of pale green paper, highly perfumed, and with a border of stamped cupids, which would have excited admiration in the beholders, had not the cypher 50 over the last stanza caused them to tremble at the length of the poem submitted to their judgment. Mr. Thoresby, in a melancholy and rather drawling tone, then began :—

“ ‘ Lady, this rose of blushing hue
Is pale to that which warms your cheek ;
And of your eye the tender blue
We vainly in the violet seek.’

You will observe among the flowers worked on the *port-feuille*, Miss Vavasour, there are roses, and Lady Maria has a high colour, which suggested the line—

‘ Is pale to that which warms your cheek ;’
which certainly—is—rather pretty.”

“ Pretty ! quite beautiful,” said the malicious Lucy ;—“ quite beautiful.”

Olinda, who was exceedingly vexed at Fleetwood, was not so much disposed to minister to Mr. Thoresby's vanity.

"Since you allow us to criticise," said she, "don't you think 'eyes of tender blue' gives one rather an idea of weak eyes, which you know are neither poetical nor becoming?"

"Pardon me," said the poet, colouring slightly, and in a more eager tone, "upon that line I pique myself more than all the rest of the poem. Dear Miss Vavasour, don't you feel—Miss Boyd, I'm *sure you* do—the delicacy of the line—

' And of your eye the tender blue.'

Tender, there, seems soft, pale; and by the way, Miss Dawson's eyes are *very* light, and there are violets worked on the *port-feuille*, so you see the line is appropriate, and not otherwise than pretty."

"Oh, I see now," said Olinda, dreading she should be obliged to fight her way through the forty-nine succeeding stanzas of the poem: which

however I shall not transcribe, lest my readers should be tempted to insert it in their respective albums ; and in this age of literary piracy, poor Mr. Thoresby's valuable production might unfairly be appropriated by some one of the first writers of the age ; therefore I shall only say, what justice compels me to add, that each of the remaining stanzas was as good, or nearly so, as that which has been recorded on the impartial page.

Not content with the prolonged infliction the young ladies had undergone, and which had nearly exhausted even Miss Boyd's patience, Mr. Thoresby, when he had received the faint compliments they were able to muster, resumed the subject.

“ Since you are fond of verse, I will seek out of my poetic stores something that will please you. Did you ever (I dare say you have) meet with my Ode to John Pounceford ? I addressed several indeed to him, but I mean that beginning —

‘ Go, youth beloved, my early friend.’ ”

“ I cannot say that I have,” replied Lucy.

“ Then I will get it for you to-morrow ; though talking of John Pounceford always awakens in my mind the most melancholy reflections—much more melancholy than if I had lost him by death. Indeed my health and spirits suffered so much from that event, that I have never been quite the same man since.”

“ Do not let us talk of any thing that distresses you.”

“ It is rather a relief, my dear Miss Vava-sour, to discuss one’s feelings and sorrows with friends so amiable. I will tell you the whole story.”

“ John Pounceford, of Oriel, was my best and most inseparable friend : he, like me, had some taste for literature—similar pursuits, you know, strengthen friendship ; he certainly had *some* talent, not as much as he *thought* he had ; however, in some of the *Annals* you will find things of his signed *Lycidas* ; mine (as you probably know) are signed *Bul-bul*. We gene-

rally communicated to each other every new production before it was printed. I happened to write an Elegy on a White Mouse, which certainly was not without spirit and poetry. Of course I showed it to Pounceford, who expressed himself pleased with it; and though he did not express himself so warmly as friendship like our's demanded, I allowed for a natural feeling of mortification, in an aspiring young man, at finding himself so far surpassed in his favourite pursuit; and to do away any unpleasant idea in his mind at once, I said, 'Pounceford, my dear fellow, upon my honour I don't think this elegy better than that which you wrote 'On leaving Margate' last year:' he only replied, 'Do you think so?' and kept whistling 'Happy tawny Moor' for half an hour, which I thought rather singular at the time. Well, my elegy was read at all the tea-tables within five miles of Oxford, and all the young ladies insisted on having it in their albums. At the request of several friends I was persuaded to

send it to the Editor of 'The Amaranth.' Speaking of it to a friend soon after, he asked if I had seen a parody on it, which had just appeared in 'The Votive Wreath;' and truly there was a most disgraceful, stupid, and bitter parody, and with some difficulty I ascertained that it was the production of John Pounceford, of Oriel College ! Only think what I must have suffered ! A heart like mine—from treachery like his."

Both hearers hastily expressed their entire disapprobation of Mr. Pounceford's conduct, and then proposed a walk ; for, being under sentence of hearing the elegy, they did not know at what moment of the day Mr. Thoresby might claim their unwilling ears, and they dreaded an MS. from his pocket as travellers do a pistol at their chaise-window.

When Miss Vavasour had put on her bonnet, Lucy entered, equipped also for a walk. " Olinda," said she, " I hope you will not be easily tired to-day ; I want to make you go

with me on a little expedition I have very much at heart, and cannot so well go alone; it is to see the little parsonage which Mr. Watson is to have. The poor old gentleman who had it died a month since, and Mr. Johnson and Watson will be there to-day at two, to look it over, and see the capabilities for improvement about it: they wished me to see it also, and give my opinion: I should like you to see it, and give yours. I did not like to ask Lady Portbury to drive there, for fear it should bore her, and limit me in time; but you do not mind a walk, and this will not be more than four miles."

Olinda expressed her ready compliance, and they set off.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER a due proportion of green lanes, dusty road, brooks crossed by stepping-stones, and stiles to be scrambled over, Lucy began to look about her like a dog at fault, and then exclaimed,

“ Yes, Olinda, I know we are near it ; they told me it was just after we passed the Red Lion, and there it is ! ”

“ But is that a lion, Lucy ? are you sure ? ”

Well might Olinda enquire, for the artist had painted just such a representation of the animal as is now hanging up at the inn at Thames Ditton, which sign, the first time I saw it, appeared to me a very fair display of a German sausage, but the inhabitants of that

pretty village have kindly agreed to consider it as a "Red Lion."

Miss Boyd profited by this landmark, and a few steps farther they espied a road full of ruts, which proved to be the way to the parsonage. An old white gate that had fallen off the hinges, lying between two stone posts, indicated it had been the approach, as it is technically called; and they then beheld two gentlemen, who were recognised as Messrs. Johnson and Watson.

After the first greeting, the latter said, "My future abode is a little out of repair, Lucy, but you won't be frightened at that."

"Oh no! we shall have so much the more pleasure in setting it to rights our own way."

There had been a shrubbery on each side of the little avenue, but the broken branches and neglected appearance of the shrubs and trees made it look desolate. Two cows occasionally passed and repassed among them, and two large sows were diligently rooting up the perennial

plants that grew below. Opposite the door was a large grass-plat, where a dial told its neglected hours ; a dilapidated porch was over the house-door ; the roots of the creepers which had once covered it, were still in the ground, but the plants themselves spread their weak and prostrate arms over the long grass, as if seeking for assistance.

They entered a little hall, the cool air and broken windows of which had induced two portly toads to make it their constant residence. Some swallows “ whose situation required a temporary retirement,” had made their “ pendant beds and procreant cradles” in the windows, without prejudice to a little colony of bats, who claimed a share in the tenement.

A door on the right brought the party into the dining-parlour, which had been salmon-colour : two large convenient closets in this room had their doors painted bright blue ; where the locks had been, was marked by frequent prints

of dirty thumbs. In this apartment there was no other furniture than a broken tobacco pipe and two cabbage leaves. It was not without some surprise that her friends heard Miss Boyd exclaim —

“ Oh delightful ! What good luck ! ”

Mr. Johnson took off his spectacles and rubbed them, in order to share the discovery he supposed her to have made. Olinda opened her long eyes and coral lips with surprise ; and even the ruddy Mr. Watson asked what she saw.

“ Oh, those closets, to be sure ! the silver spoons, glass, and china will be there ; my tea, sugar, and jam, will be in the other. Oh how comfortable it will be when we have it all tidy —every thing at hand ! ”

“ And there is not so much to do as there seems, Lucy,” said her lover ; “ not much solid repair, only paint, glaze, and paper a little.

The drawing-room had a bay-window ; it looked on a little lawn, in the midst of which

was a muddy pond, covered with duck-weed. Nettles were decidedly the plants that flourished most luxuriantly on this side of the house ; but Lucy saw a neat marble chimney-piece, and other merits. A sitting-room adjoining was to be the spot where Watson was to compose, or compile his sermons —

“ As wit and fortune will,
Or as the destinies decree.”

As they ascended the stairs, accompanied by some itinerant hens, who were alarmed at this unusual intrusion, and ran before, to introduce them, as it seemed, to a red-eyed monster of seventy-five, who appeared with a sauce-pan in hand, the only human inhabitant of the parsonage, Watson and Lucy were joyously discussing plans concerning cupboards and ovens, to which Mr. Johnson occasionally threw in an improving hint ; and Olinda also, from her former education being so different from her present habits, was enabled to bear a very respectable share in conversing on their alterations.

The upper story and attics were inspected with the deepest interest. The garden, where roses and fennel, charlock and gooseberry-bushes, strove in amicable confusion, was pronounced to be a present wilderness, but future Eden. However, one agreeable surprise was common to the whole party; the offices were excellent, and in good repair, being even now in use, and well attended to. The late occupant of the parsonage had been old and infirm; a long rheumatic fever induced him to lodge at the apothecary's in the village, where he might be constantly in the way of assistance. The parsonage had been for nine months in the custody of the aged matron, already mentioned, who

“ Did not watch her charge too well.”

Miss Boyd and her friend proceeded homeward when the scrutiny was concluded, accompanied for one mile by their clerical convoy, who then bade them farewell.

They arrived at home dog-tired, but in time

to dress for dinner, at which Olinda looked very handsome to all eyes, particularly those of Fleetwood, though she never had felt less good-will to him. All she had seen that morning went far to persuade her that poverty was not to her taste. The dilapidated parsonage was in her eye, and the homely employments that Miss Boyd seemed so ready to engage in. She pondered on the pigs and the nettles, the pond and the toads, till she felt the sincerest commiseration for her friend, and surprise at her rushing madly on a destiny so deplorable.

“ There must be a touch of madness, after all, in Lucy’s composition ; it is not from ignorance of the elegances and comforts of life : she has seen Fanover, she loves reading, she draws well, she is fond of embroidery, and is ingenious in all sorts of ornamental work ; surely she will not have time for any of these things ; she must work like a servant all the morning, to sit with Mr. Watson all the evening !”

She determined to talk to Miss Boyd on the subject, but cautiously.

In the evening a young man of large fortune, named Sir John Creswell, who had been the latest arrival at Fanover, struck by Olinda's appearance, began to talk to her with some animation, which roused Lady Maria's ire, who directly joined, that she might divide them. She was so pretty and so coquettish, that Sir John Creswell, who had a good deal of ready admiration at every body's service, speedily gave her more than an equal share of his attention; and Lady Maria, who had the advantage of three years' experience more than Olinda, by the position of her chair and other dexterous manœuvres, gradually cut off the sunshine of Sir John's conversation from her rival, who, however, having no particular wish to retain it, at last rose up, and was going to the piano forte, when Lady Juliana said,

“ Oh come here and take my part, Olinda, against Mr. Fleetwood.”

Olinda came, saying, "Are you then so deep in a quarrel as to want a second? perhaps I shall say, like Sir Lucius O'Trigger, 'tis a very pretty quarrel as it stands;' and not choose to conciliate matters. But what is it about?"

"Why, he says he cannot bear the slightest allusion in poetry to any of the persons in the pagan mythology."

"Nay, Lady Juliana, I did not go quite so far as that, I only objected to those very trite acquaintances, Jupiter, Juno, and their *société intime* of Venus, Cupid, &c. whom I am so very happy to find gone out of fashion. Some of the obscure nymphs could be turned to account; I have often besought poets of my acquaintance, to make some use of Chelone in her tortoiseshell, if it were only to turn her into a comb."

"A very good thought indeed," said Mr. Thoresby.

"Perhaps," said Fleetwood, "nothing could

be more provoking than the manner in which the Grecian machinery used to be dragged into poetry, the simplicity of which one had before been admiring. When Andrew Marvel's nymph has lamented her fawn in the most natural and girlish manner, she suddenly says,

‘ The brotherless Heliades
Weep in such amber tears as these.’

“ Allan Ramsay, after his striking comparison of the flaxen-haired Bessy Bell, and her dark and diamond-eyed friend, or rival, Mary Gray, exclaims,

‘ O Jove ! she’s like thy Pallas.’

“ I am convinced all poets had learned to groan under this tyranny, long before any attempt to shake it off was made. Pope only used his sylphs in mock-heroic poetry ; Hayley was not sufficiently powerful to set a fashion ; Mr. Thomas Campbell interested us for the Honourable East India Company’s gods,

‘ Camdeo bright and Ganesa sublime !’

but we could only figure them to ourselves as

a golden Venus and Cupid, disguised in white shawls and bangles. The fact is, that story and song, statues and pictures, have rendered the Greek gods and goddesses so distinct in and familiar to our minds, that we remember them as human creatures.

“It was reserved for Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron to recall the most general and natural superstitions of human nature to their lost empire. Ghosts and witches, from their vague powers, shadowy, mysterious appearances, unsatisfactory and oracular replies, are so much more imposing and interesting.”

“I am sorry,” said Olinda, “to vote against you, Lady Juliana, as you called me in as your auxiliary, but I must side with Mr. Fleetwood; a thin, pale ghost is infinitely more touching than a jolly god or cheerful goddess; and I agree also in thinking, the less that is seen of our friends the ghosts, the better.”

“Fauns and satyrs, in reality,” said Sir

George Hanbury, "must have proved as great a nuisance as footpads; but what would be pleasant in that case, would be, the impossibility of being condemned to a solitary walk; go down a long avenue and you find a Hamadryad in every tree!"

"Now I think fairies a pretty, cheerful sort of superstition," said Mr. Thoresby.

"Oh yes, and so truly pastoral!" rejoined Lady Juliana."

"The supposed agency of fairies is too like that of monkeys and mischievous children to make them interesting. Beings who drink out of acorn-cups, dance in rings, bewitch the cows, and put sixpences in the housemaid's slipper, we cannot fear or care for; and the only story of the kind in which a fairy excites our sympathy, is when Tam Lune declares, that

'Aye at every seven years' end
They pay a tiend to hell,
And I 'm sae fair and full of flesh
I fear 'twill be mysel !'

You see the horror of his chance, without

perfectly comprehending his situation, and this is essential to the participation of supernatural distresses. There is a story," continued Fleetwood, "which it is said was originally printed as an addition to 'Drelincourt on Death,' by a publisher, who found that work would not sell, and who succeeded in getting it off by the device. The ghostly heroine, named *Mrs. Veal*, whose intention seems to have been to give an afflicted friend comfort and advice, is induced to talk of trifling and mundane matters with so much simplicity, that on her friend observing her silk riding-habit 'looks even *better* than when she saw it last,' *Mrs. Veal* replies, that 'she has had it dyed and made up again.' The distinctness of this fact spoils the tale, which, as it was published long before we had become familiar with a thousand delicious German impossibilities, must have been invaluable in the dearth of horrors our grandmothers laboured under."

This discussion was here interrupted by

Lord Portbury, who brought Sir George a letter, and apologised with civil fervour for having omitted to send it in the morning, when the cover was opened, but the letter mislaid till then.

“ A very stupid thing of me indeed, my dear Sir George; nothing of the kind ever happened before,—except, by the by, once in Scotland, when I was on a visit to Lord Kirk-Andrews, a Scotch cousin of mine,—his place is near Cupar, and is called Monyhavers. Now we were going from thence to a moor he had (a small house); it was called Glenreestle. No, we were coming from Glenreestle to Monyhavers—I’m not sure — stay — no, we were going from Monyhavers to Glenreestle;—yes, I remember, two very fine dogs were sent me that morning, a present from Macnidrie of Lubberlaw. I lost one of them the next year in the most provoking manner. I must tell you about it: he was tied up in the stable, and I always like a short halter, *that* Carper knew—but

he was the most careless fellow ! I could *not* keep him. He went afterwards to live with Colonel Dauberley in Devonshire, where he set fire to the house. It was burnt to the ground ! and the insurance——”

“ Lord Portbury ! Lord Portbury ! ” said the languid voice of his wife from the *écarté*-table ; “ do lend me your purse, I am losing money shockingly.”

The fact was, that Lady Portbury thought with compassion on the situation of Sir George, who had with equal courage and politeness placed himself in an attitude of attention, and prepared a face of interest with which he meant to hear the details of Colonel Dauberley’s misfortunes. Great was his joy at being spared a history that would have certainly lasted the remainder of the evening.

The next day brought an arrival to Fanover that was expected to prove of value in the eyes of the young ladies. Lord Sedley and his sister Lady Mardiston came to fulfil the pro-

mise they had made in London. They arrived just before the first bell rang for dinner, and Lady Portbury accompanied Lady Mardiston to her dressing-room. Lord Sedley followed them to the door, bearing in his arms a small white dog belonging to his sister, saying, he always looked after Blanchette, for Pulcheria could not live without it.

As they shut the door, Lady Maria observed to Sir John Creswell, how touching it was to witness the devoted attention Lord Sedley paid his sister. It proved such a good heart, so much sensibility, such a disposition to fulfil his duty in all respects and relations ; and, added she, “ to such a disagreeable person as Lady Mardiston, there is twice as much merit in being so full of *égards*.”

“ Say no more on this subject, Lady Maria,” cried Fleetwood ; “ we are all convinced, and to-morrow all the men at Fanover will appear, each bearing a little white dog, the property of some near female relation : it will become a uni-

versal fashion, now that we know it is the way to win the 'golden opinions' of Lady Maria Winterton."

The dinner bell dispersed them.

Olinda felt some curiosity to see Lady Mardiston out of her travelling bonnet. She was very unlike her brother. Lord Sedley was slender, fair, and rather good-looking, though insignificant; the sister was very tall and thin, with a good and distinguished figure, but plain face, and common features; all that could be remarked in her was uncommonly keen grey eyes, with rather a disagreeable expression, and that kind of cool self-possession, which belongs to those who highly esteem and place great dependance on themselves. She was a widow, and many years older than her brother.

When the company assembled before dinner, a single glance sufficed to convince Olinda that Lady Mardiston and Lady Maria entertained no small portion of ill-will to each other.

The latter had placed herself in a somewhat

embarrassing position ; before the arrival of Lord Sedley, she had taken great pains to attract the attention of Sir John Creswell, partly because he was a rich young man of fashion, and partly to prevent Olinda from pleasing him. In this scheme she had entirely succeeded ; but the arrival of Lord Sedley, on whose conquest she had long set her heart, made her very much wish Sir John's visit was ended : she did not choose absolutely and rudely to get rid of him, far less to make him over to Olinda ; but she found him very much in her way, and such a secondary consideration, that she instantly renewed her attack on Lord Sedley with such diligence and vivacity, that before the second course was placed on the table, the sharp eyes of Lady Mardiston shot fire. She did not wish her brother married at all, and least of all to Lady Maria, who for the last two years had given her the utmost alarm.

She looked round for a counter-charm, and thought Olinda might prove an innocent spe-

cific. She had not witnessed the short flirtation their musical consultations in town had produced, or she might not have liked such an expedient; but she considered, if he took too much notice of Olinda, she was easily got rid of. The want of fortune and rank were reasonable objections wherewith to confound any matrimonial project respecting her, should Lord Sedley conceive so rash a speculation; but the worst of Lady Maria in this point of view was, that, according to the usual worldly estimate, no objection could be made to her as a wife for Lord Sedley. Well born, highly connected, handsome, accomplished, with a suitable fortune, it was difficult to say why he ought not to marry her; yet her violent and determined temper, and the open defiance she had always shown to Lady Mardiston, proved that such a woman would entirely overthrow the influence she wished to preserve over her brother.

Lady Mardiston had early in life, contrary to the wishes of all her friends, married a man

who proved in a short time to be as little suited to her as they foresaw ; their disagreements were perpetual and bitter. Sir Robert was a spendthrift, and his wife penurious and grasping ; their affairs soon became so much deranged, that they were obliged to live abroad, where, after many years of—

“ Accursed and unquiet wrangling days,”

Sir Robert for once obliged his wife, by leaving her a widow.

A small and ill-paid jointure from his next heir, would have obliged her to remain abroad for ever, had not Lord Sedley, her half-brother, when on his travels, arrived at Geneva to pay her a visit. He was good-natured and silly, and she made every one, of whom she could or might obtain anything, a sort of prey. She soon ingratiated herself so much with Lord Sedley, that she was his principal director upon all occasions, and disposed of a large share of his income for her own use. She therefore had long determined,

either that he should not marry at all, or that he should marry a woman she could rule.

When the ladies retired to the drawing-room, Lady Mardiston accosted Olinda with great civility, and took occasion to make her many compliments, deserved and undeserved, not forgetting to praise her particularly for those points in her exterior in which she excelled Lady Maria.

This awoke the demon of envy in that young lady's bosom; she joined the conversation, and endeavoured to throw in a seasoning of mortification for Olinda, by making a number of spiteful observations, and talking contemptuously at her.

Olinda's temper was good, and she was timid in conversation from being unused to society. She bore all Lady Maria's taunts with good humour, and without appearing to appropriate them to herself, though her colour rose, and she looked a little disconcerted: which made Lady

Mardiston conclude that she was a little shy simpleton who could not take her own part, for in her opinion "an oak with one green leaf on it," would have answered Lady Maria.

"This is," thought Lady Mardiston, "just a proper flirt for Sedley; pretty and agreeable enough to occupy him, and easily quelled when likely to please too much:" and here (like many astute persons who judge others by themselves) she was egregiously mistaken. In spite of Olinda's apparent moderation, "*le diable n'y perdait rien*;" she was in fact, to the last degree, provoked at Lady Maria's attack, and for the first time a vague idea of vengeance suggested itself to her mind.

When the gentlemen came in, Lady Mardiston called Lord Sedley to her, and was going to introduce him to Olinda, had not both lady and gentleman avowed a previous acquaintance in town.

The conversation had not proceeded many minutes, however, when Lady Maria sat down to

play on the guitar, and having arranged herself and instrument in the most becoming manner, began to play "the fairy bells," and called Lord Sedley, begging him to tell her if she played it right, as she had only learnt it by ear.

He hastened to obey, and she detained him to sing a second to some other songs. As he was known not to have a voice, and possessed a very imperfect ear, he had seldom received such an invitation, and was both flattered and delighted. A good deal of husky and tuneless chirping on his part accompanied Lady Maria's sweet and clear voice, but she looked all beaming approbation. When he was tolerably in tune she said, "Very well indeed, Lord Sedley, this song suits your voice;" when he was lost in a maze of discord, she said, "No, you have not this passage quite perfect, we will practise this again to-morrow."

In short, the pink and silver ribbon that tied the guitar, seemed also to bind Lord Sedley, who remained at Lady Maria's elbow all the

evening; while Lady Mardiston burnt with indignation, and thought Olinda the most helpless idiot she had ever seen, and scarce competent to be the cat's-paw she had intended to make her.

What very much added to Lady Mardiston's uneasiness was, that she was obliged to leave Lord Sedley exposed to the enemy's fire, from an unlucky promise she had made to an old uncle, from whom she was trying to woo a legacy.

General Cartwright was one of the most ill-tempered, fidgety, bilious, and capricious old gentlemen that ever left Bombay: valets innumerable, submissive Indians, sly Italians, persevering Scots, sharp Irishmen, patient French, had all tried in vain to please General Cartwright, and departed with broken heads and baffled purpose.

Of all who had ever approached him, the only person who possessed sufficient hardihood and management combined, to preserve his good graces for more than two months, was Lady Mardiston. With her "sacred hunger of gold" he had coquetted for a year and a half; and once,

when she had the dexterity to persuade him that a dish of “Pish-pash” (or rice and chicken) which he d——d his cook for having over-salted, was not salt enough, and actually added more of the condiment, assuring him it would be improved by the addition, he was so pleased by this novel treatment of his assertion, that he presented her with a large sapphire, and soon after invited her to accompany him to Nice, where he meant to spend the ensuing autumn and winter. She had eagerly closed with an offer that would not have afforded as much pleasure to any one else, and the engagement was to call her from Fanover in three days.

She could not in the present case take her brother with her, and she dared not caution him against falling in love with Lady Maria, as that precaution would in all probability have contributed to its defeat; but she took him with her in a little walk to air Blanchette, the day before her departure, and after various desultory remarks, asked if Lord Sedley had heard

Olinda sing some particular air. On his reply in the negative, she said—"Oh, then, do make her play it for you; she has a charming talent for music—plays so much better than Lady Maria, which I am very glad to know."

"And why, Pulcheria?" said the simple lord.

"Why, you know I am anxious you should excel in any talent you wish to acquire. You are anxious about your music, and Lady Maria said something that was so discouraging!"

"Did she? why she tells me—but what did you hear her say?"

"That she would not tell *you* so, but a man could sing very few airs who had not above six notes in his voice."

"Six notes! You don't say so! Well, how very insincere she must be! That's very good, by Jove! Six notes! How very insincere of Lady Maria!"

"I have observed," resumed Lady Mardiston, "that she is not so frank as young people generally are; but about your music she must

be wrong, because Miss Vavasour (who is much the best musician of the two) said, that she was quite of a different opinion; that with a little more cultivation you would sing the most agreeable second she had ever heard."

"Well, that was good-natured of Miss Vavasour, and I should think she was the best judge; she plays very well. I must say, I am surprised at Lady Maria."

"Don't take any notice of what I have told you, Sedley; it was not intended I should overhear it, and I do not know why I repeat it now."

Lady Mardiston departed, with the pleasure of thinking she had sowed "deadly division" between her brother and Lady Maria; but her care proved to have been needless, as that young lady's father, being seized with a dangerous fit of gout in the stomach, thought proper to call her home, and by that means dispersed one of Lady Mardiston's terrors.

The day after Lady Maria's departure,

Olinda was proceeding to the flower-garden, which was at some distance from the house, intending a predatory incursion on the greenhouse. In her walk she encountered Mr. Thorresby, without his hat, which made her look at him with some surprise. He inquired whither she was going, and begged leave to accompany her: a request she could not well refuse, though she by no means thought it would add to the pleasure of the expedition.

They walked for some minutes in silence, but from the diligent sighing of her companion Olinda began to comprehend that he considered himself in some distress or affliction; yet his eyes were as round and vacant as usual, his cheeks as red, his hair as neatly curled, and divided on one side. He was too poetical to wear much neckcloth at any time, and on the present occasion his collar was entirely open, and a small black handkerchief loosely twisted round his throat, arranged in the fashion of a

ship-wrecked mariner at Astley's, when he swims ashore out of a pasteboard sea.

“ Mr. Thoresby,” said Olinda, “ are you aware you have forgotten your hat ?”

“ Have I indeed, Miss Vavasour !” he replied, in a melancholy and hollow tone ; “ have I really ! How strange ! how like me ! But you must forgive, and not wonder at any part of my conduct. I am in a very peculiar state of mind, I may say a most singular situation.”

“ What has happened ?” asked Olinda, beginning to feel some curiosity.

Mr. Thoresby was silent for a moment, and then heaved two of the deepest and most poetical sighs that ever were breathed in that county, but spoke not even then.

“ I beg your pardon,” said Olinda, “ for my indiscreet question ;” surmising that Mr. Thoresby would release his secret when he found she made no further effort to extract it.

Mr. Thoresby, after a very short pause, said,

“ I know, Miss Vavasour, I may depend on your discretion and prudence; but as other persons are implicated in my confidence, allow me to claim your secrecy. It is a relief to discuss one’s feelings with a friend like you.”

At the recurrence of this phrase, Olinda dreaded she should hear some further proof of Mr. John Pounceford’s delinquencies.

Mr. Thoresby, however, continued. “ I must, besides your secrecy, claim your indulgence not to think me the vainest of men, when revealing two discoveries I have made,—one, highly painful to a feeling heart; the other, the most exhilarating and transporting that in other circumstances than mine, alas! could be made; and I will ask you to communicate, as a friend, your opinion of the line of conduct I ought to pursue in a situation the most delicate and embarrassing in which a man can be placed. Ah! Miss Vavasour, judge then what suffering such a situation must cause to one whose feelings are so acute, so tremblingly alive to every

species of emotion, as you must perceive mine ever are.

“ Undoubtedly, Miss Vavasour, you remember a blue satin port-feuille, and a few lines I wrote on receiving it, when I imagined it might be the gift of a person to whom I have since become devotedly attached. I was mistaken ! and the melancholy truth was thus revealed to me :—passing from the breakfast-room the other morning, with the port-feuille in my hand, I met old Mrs. Johnson, of the Vicarage, getting into her pony-chaise. I naturally offered my arm, which she accepted, and seeing the port-feuille, said, ‘ Ah ! Mr. Thoresby, I see what Lucy Boyd has given you ; but I won’t tell Watson — I never make mischief among lovers ; ’—and the foolish old lady went laughing to her pony-chaise, regardless of the mortal stab she had given to my peace !

“ The blue satin book, then, is the gift of Miss Boyd ! from which circumstance, and other indications of preference which I have

observed, though it does not become me to mention them, I entertain the painful conviction that Miss Boyd has become partial to the unhappy man before you !”

“ Partial to you ! Lucy Boyd ! Mr. Thoresby, believe me, you are quite—quite mistaken,” said Olinda, aghast with surprise at his vanity ; “ surely you know that Lucy is engaged to Mr. Watson ?”

“ I know Miss Boyd is *engaged* to Mr. Watson,” resumed the self-satisfied Mr. Thoresby, “ and I do not, I assure you, arraign her general discretion and amiable character. Young persons of your sex, Miss Vavasour, are apt to regard any little advantages of talent and exterior,” added he, fixing his eyes modestly on his boot, “ with more favourable interest than such trifles deserve. Mr. Watson, though a deserving young man, is rather undistinguished, and — and — it has been my fortune to be much in the same society with Miss Boyd for the last two years.”

“It is quite imp—it is certainly a mistake, Mr. Thoresby, take my word for it,” said Olinda, enraged for her friend, and colouring.

“It is natural that you should say so, my good Miss Vavasour, but my observations are but too just. Remember, I am speaking to you *quite* confidentially, and remember too that

“ ‘A maid unask’d may own a well-placed flame.
Not loving *first*, but loving *ill*, is shame.’ ”

With regard to another, and still more agitating disclosure, I have to make——”

“Heavens!” thought Olinda, “he is going to tell me I am in love with him.”

Mr. Thoresby paused—“The fact is,” said he, “that I was not presumptuous enough to form any pretensions—to offer any mark of attention to a person I infinitely and respectfully admired, [Olinda shuddered,] till a fortunate circumstance revealed to me that I was most undeservedly preferred—[Olinda started] Do you remember, Miss Vavasour, one evening we were all dancing quadrilles, (the day of the

breakfast,) Sir John Creswell had just presented the most beautiful moss-rose to Lady Maria ; it somehow was broken a moment after, and Lady Maria picking it up, said, ‘ There, Mr. Thoresby, I make *you* a present.’ ”

“ And do you infer from *this*,” replied Olinda, “ that Lady Maria loves you ? ”

“ My dear Miss Vavasour, words are nothing on these occasions ; manner, expression is every thing, and Lady Maria’s expression was certainly very marked at that moment. I am the last man in the world to flatter myself, but ’tis impossible I should be mistaken.”

Olinda was not as anxious to justify Lady Maria as Lucy, and began to be much afraid that any thing she might herself say, would be construed as a proof of attachment ; therefore, when Mr. Thoresby again requested she would advise him how to act in what he persisted in calling his singularly embarrassing situation, she recommended his remaining entirely passive till he received some further

encouragement from Lady Maria; and this conversation brought them to the hall-door, where they separated—Mr. Thoresby to hammer out a sentimental sonnet; and Olinda ran up stairs to Lucy's room, to whom she recounted the extraordinary scene, and both laughed for some moments.

“What a pity,” said Lucy, “that Mrs. Johnson should have told that I sent the portefeuille! he was almost certain that it came from Lady Maria:—it was the only thing that did not sell at our charity-sale; and it was such a good thought, sending it to him!”

CHAPTER V.

As for sailors—I don't admire 'em ;
I would not be a sailor's bride,
For in their courting, they 're still discoursing
Of things consarnin' the ocean wide.

BALLAD.

I BEG to dissent entirely from the quatrain that heads my chapter, as I do most heartily admire and respect that frank-hearted, generous, and friendly body of men, who are more ready than any of our fellow creatures to offer disinterested kindness to any one who stands in need of it.

Of this respected brotherhood a member now arrived at Fanover, named Captain Aubrey. He was young, good-looking, sensible, and pos-

essed an estate affording an income of 2000*l.* a-year ; he had, among other good qualities, that singular facility in falling in love which we have often heard is ascribed to his profession ; and he had a singular facility in falling out of love, which may be seen in a great many professions.

He had not been many days at the Castle before he testified a very marked interest in Olinda. This predilection was viewed in a very different light by various members of the society then at Fanover. Lord Portbury highly approved of the probable establishment it opened to Olinda. To Lady Portbury, who considered every condition that did not offer immense wealth as abject penury, and marriage as a kind of barter, it seemed that Captain Aubrey was not worth marrying, and that if Olinda accepted him, it would be like risking your whole fortune in a lottery where there were but small prizes. She computed the value of Olinda's eyes and complexion in the matri-

monial tariff, and thought that to give them 2000*l.* a-year was absolute waste.

Lucy Boyd, on the other hand, was eager for Captain Aubrey's success; she saw no objection that could reasonably be made to himself, and justly considered his situation would afford all the real comforts of life: why should Olinda wish for more?

But the person who appeared the most capricious, unfair, and ill-judging on this occasion, was Preston Fleetwood. When Captain Aubrey first arrived, Mr. Fleetwood not only approved of and praised him, but talked more with and to him than he had done with any other of the guests, and he rather engaged him in conversation with the young ladies. After Captain Aubrey had improved his acquaintance with them, however, and grew to distinguish Olinda, Fleetwood became more cold to him, and more distant to her; and as things proceeded, his coldness increased to avoidance, and his distance degenerated into ill-humour.

Olinda was vexed ; but Captain Aubrey was too much occupied with his present pursuit to observe how it affected Fleetwood. Olinda did not feel disposed to like Captain Aubrey more than as an acquaintance ; her present existence (now that Lady Portbury had recovered her good-humour) was agreeable enough. At eighteen, people are rarely very anxious about the future ; she did not, therefore, see why she should marry at all then ; and at the bottom of her heart there lurked a suspicion that Fleetwood did, or would love her, and a kind of confused expectation that he would either get a prize in the lottery, be made Prime Minister, find a mine, be adopted by some childless duke, or turn out to be somebody's son ; in short, become rich and great by some of those short processes by which novelists make all things easy in the concluding chapters of their instructive works. Where the heroes and heroines are separated, it is only to live in elegant and wealthy discontent ; you may observe they

never require parochial relief, or are passed to their respective parishes.

Thus the romance which had grown up with Olinda in her early solitude, strangely combined with the vanity and worldliness acquired in her short experience of London and Fanover. She resolved not to marry Captain Aubrey, should he propose; but as it was rather entertaining to be flattered and admired, particularly in Fleetwood's presence, and a means of setting him a good example, she could not bring herself to perform the duty of showing Captain Aubrey betimes that he was sure of rejection, and actually by her soft manner and captivation pre-pense, led him to believe that he had a fair chance of success.

This was very wrong: but Olinda had not received either wholesome counsel or good example on these subjects since she had lived in the world; and while under the protection of her mother, Mrs. Vavasour had considered her as too young to discuss such topics

with, and had, therefore, reserved her advice upon them, (as parents frequently do,) for a time—that never was to come.

If, therefore, you cannot take an interest in persons of faulty conduct and erring judgment, I fear you will be but disappointed in your “Aims” and my “Ends.” Have a little patience with Olinda, then: time and experience may yet do something for her, and if not——

“ See how the world its votaries rewards.”

“ Olinda,” said Miss Boyd one day, “ do tell me, do you mean to accept Captain Aubrey when he proposes? Have you quite made up your mind? I hope so, I am sure.”

“ I think I have made up my mind, Lucy; but I assure you it is ‘t’other way—t’other way.’ The man’s a good man, but I cannot resolve to marry him. Just consider: marrying is a serious matter. You have had time to make up your mind—to know Mr. Wat-

son—to think how you will live afterwards. Then Lady Portbury says it would be a very foolish thing to do; that we should be very uncomfortable, and not have enough to live on. She says it would be the silliest thing in the world.”

“ If you really do not like him, you are quite right not to marry him. If your principal objection arises from not knowing him sufficiently to decide whether his character will suit you, I dare say he would gladly agree to give you time to know it better. But, dear Olinda, do you think Lady Portbury, who spends so much, and has so much to spend—do you think her a judge of what would be sufficient for you or me? We have both been used to a very moderate scale of expense. The price of the bracelet she bought last, would dress either of us handsomely for a year; and an income that would seem poverty to her, might include every rational comfort in life.”

“ What you say, Lucy, is very true, and I should have said the same, if I said what it is right to think, and what I should have thought before I lived in the world; but since I have seen what it is to be a fine lady, I honestly own I should prefer it infinitely to living quietly and economically as you intend to do. When I was at home I seemed to have every thing I wanted, because I had never seen the splendours and gaiety of the world, or the position of the rich in it; I did not know then, what is now quite obvious, that there is something ridiculous in being poor !”

“ Ridiculous, Olinda ! I cannot understand you.”

“ I mean that I should in a certain degree feel mortified by having my door opened by a maid covered with soap-suds and her cap awry, instead of a smart porter. Don't you remember when we called at Mr. Spriggins's door, how Lady Portbury laughed with Sir George Hanbury ?”

“ Yes,” said Lucy ; “ and another instance of the same sort which you may remember, was the mirth occasioned in the breakfast-room by Mrs. Johnson’s shabby pony-chaise when Watson drove me to the vicarage. While I was arranging myself and cloak in it, we heard every word they said. Now, Olinda, you would have been vexed.”

Olinda coloured and hesitated ; she feared Lucy would be mortified by her confessing the truth.

“ Well,” said Lucy, “ Watson and I only laughed : and he said, ‘ How things go by comparison ; poor old Mrs. Johnson thinks this a very distinguished equipage, and you, Lucy, will not have a better one when we take possession of the parsonage ; yet we are very comfortable in it, and are kept as completely from the wet road as if we had a carriage as gay as Cinderella’s transformed melon.’ And now, Olinda, I will say something that sounds both ill-natured and ungrateful to a person who is

the best friend I have, but it is only to you in confidence, and for your good. Suppose you were driving from this great hall-door with Preston Fleetwood in such a carriage,—Lord Portbury's guests laugh, and you are mortified, though you are with the cleverest, the most agreeable, and (personally) the most distinguished man at Fanover. Suppose yourself, after driving in Lady Portbury's beautiful carriage as its mistress, to hear its master talk,—as poor Lord Portbury always talks, as half the men we see talk,—should you not feel that a humiliation?"

"Yes, certainly!" said Olinda.

"And which do you consider as the most legitimate and durable cause of mortification?"

"Undoubtedly, to have a husband of whom I should be ashamed."

"Then, dear Olinda, if hereafter you find that you cannot have both the carriage and the man to suit you, remember which is the most necessary to happiness."

“ Yes,” said Olinda, “ you are right, and it is only at some moments in the day, while I hear and see these people, that their way of thinking acts upon my mind.”

But it was not Olinda’s fate to hear the same doctrine from all her friends ; the next day she was summoned to Lady Portbury’s dressing-room.

“ She of that Peri cell the sprite,”

was working the third row of a bead-purse, which had been her most arduous task since her arrival from the country. From time to time she regarded the well-flounced Mrs. Shuldham, who was arranging a wig upon a wig-block, in various braids, and puffs, and ringlets, in order to choose a mode in which Lady Portbury’s own hair should be dressed at dinner-time.

None of the methods pleased the destined wearer, who at last said, “ Well, Shuldham, you may go ; I want to talk to Miss Vavasour. Olinda, I want to talk to you seriously, and I

never can find a minute; I never know what leisure is. By the way, do you think that would be a becoming way of doing my hair? I can't think it; the hair is too much off the forehead; it does for dark women who have a great deal of shade about the eyes, but I am too fair for it. Shuldham has no imagination; she goes on always in the same way; it is so tiresome! shocking! to be obliged to spend all my time in settling how I am to be dressed. Ah, if I could have kept Eulalie! it was too beautiful the way she dressed hair; nobody ever had such a little perfection of a maid."

"How did you happen to lose her?"

"Oh, though she was charming, she had some faults! You know every one has, and must have, some little fault; and Eulalie had ways:—she used to steal my trinkets, and wear my clothes, and, poor creature, she spoke not a single word of truth; and I could not keep a sovereign in my purse, she was so apt to take money; besides, she was very pretty, and allowed

all the men to make love to her :—but the way she dressed hair ! and such trimmings as she used to invent ! Ah, I shall never again be as well dressed as when she lived with me, poor thing. And she was so attached to me : if my gown did not sit properly, she was in despair ; if my hair did not curl, or I looked ill, I was obliged to console Eulalie—she was so affectionate ; — a little hot-tempered, as all kind-hearted people are ; and those horrid cold English servants made such a fuss, because she one day ran at the French cook with a knife : he was her lover, or something.

“ That was the only time I ever saw Lord Portbury absolutely disobliging ; and Spriggins, the agent, bored me to death, by talking all sorts of nonsense to him. Now I said ‘ It’s all very well for you, Lord Portbury, who are growing bald, and for Spriggins, in his brown scratch wig, to talk of honesty and virtue, and all that kind of thing, very properly, because hair-dressing cannot signify to *you* ; but to me

it is of the last consequence ; and if you brought me a saint instead of Eulalie, of what use would she be, if she could not dress hair ?

“ Is not that the half-hour bell ? Heavens ! is it not dreadful never to have a moment’s peace ? I am torn to pieces for want of time, and I have quantities of things to say to you, Olinda, and advice to give you, but the hurry and struggle I live in is too much for human strength : ring for Shuldham, my dear : what would I give not to be married to a punctual man ! Well, Shuldham, is that the dinner-bell ? is it half-past seven ? ”

“ No, my Lady, it is the hall-door bell ; your Ladyship has an hour and a quarter to dinner yet : my Lord is not come home.”

“ Ah ! well then you may go down, and return when Miss Vavasour goes. What was I saying ?—oh ! I wanted to tell you that I am quite certain Captain Aubrey will propose : I hope you do not mean to marry him, Olinda ? ”

To this inquiry Olinda replied by disclaim-

ing the expectation of a proposal, this being the rule in similar cases: but Lady Portbury said:—

“Nonsense, Olinda; you see he will;—but do not marry him; it would be excessively foolish. You will have twenty better opportunities of marrying. He is quite poor. There is nothing so melancholy as marrying with what’s called a *competence*.”

“I do not wish or intend to marry Captain Aubrey, though I did not know he was poor: I thought he had 2000*l.* or 3000*l.* a-year.”

“So he has; but you could hardly have the commonest comfort on such an income.”

“Lucy Boyd would call that riches.”

“My dear Olinda, it would be riches to her; and so it should be: but any thing is good enough for Lucy. She is quite a plain girl, and rather vulgar-looking; of course, she can only expect to marry some *horreur* of a man. But you, who are so handsome,

and look so distinguished, you ought not to think of making a poking match, like Lucy. *You* ought to marry *well*. Every body thinks well of themselves. I dare say Lucy thinks Mr. Watson, or somebody of the same sort, would be a very suitable husband for you ; but just look in the glass, and see if Lucy and you ought to have the same expectations."

Here Lady Portbury set the example, and Olinda willingly profited by it. Both ladies fixed their eyes on the glass, and remained lost in that agreeable contemplation for some minutes, when Lady Portbury resumed the subject, and talked with such contempt and ridicule of all humble plans and prospects, and in particular those of Miss Boyd, that Olinda departed, on Mrs. Shuldhan's third avatar, convinced that Lucy, though an excellent and sensible young woman, and a sincere friend, had formed too humble an estimate of what ought to be the views of a beauty ; and she internally acceded to the position, that

persons invested with that dignity ought to marry rich peers,—unless, indeed, it should prove practicable to tame and bind Preston Fleetwood, in which case an exception might be found to the rule.

This benevolent speculation, however, received a considerable check when Miss Vavasour encountered its object. To the eye of the uninterested, a man often seems in his ordinary state of mind, when, to those who think it worth their while to study his countenance, a slight curve of the brow—an insolent independence about his chin—a sneering contraction of the nose, may give the world assurance that the gentleman is seriously affronted, indignant, and prepared for war.

No sooner had Olinda caught a glimpse of Fleetwood in the drawing-room, than she said mentally:—

“ ————— I do spy
Danger and disobedience in thine eye.”

For all the portentous indications I have enu-

merated were depicted in the most flagrant distinctness. What was to be done? She had entered the room full of conciliatory intentions, in a "very holiday humour," as Rosalind says, and here was this perverse man fighting against his own cause.

All that a young lady can do, (consistent with the dignity of a beauty,) Olinda did do, to disperse the thunder-cloud, but without success: indeed, a number of small overtures for peace failed, from the dextrous manner in which Mr. Fleetwood kept himself aloof, from his great attention to every member of the society, from Lady Portbury to the lap-dog, Olinda being the only exception. The enemy would not even treat of peace!

Captain Aubrey, on the contrary, was very assiduous, and in high spirits; and the rest of the company saw nothing of the pantomime thus acted before them, except Miss Boyd, who, from her sincere attachment to Olinda, witnessed the whole with deep interest.

In the evening, some hopes might be formed of an armistice between the belligerent powers. Captain Aubrey was called to the card-table by Lady Portbury, who saw his continued proximity to Miss Vavasour with some disapprobation ; and Olinda sat down by the fire, which had now been, for some days, the ornament of the drawing-room of an evening,—for an ornament it is at all times, and even when the heat of the weather compels us to relinquish it, something always seems wanting to the apartment.

Fleetwood suddenly drew near on some trifling pretext, and remained talking on indifferent subjects. Captain Aubrey's name having occurred in the conversation, he spoke of that gentleman with some ill-humour, and ridiculed an opinion he had expressed.

Olinda by this time found her patience rapidly diminishing, and her choler induced her to defend Captain Aubrey, adding, “ I must say, Mr. Fleetwood, I never saw any person so

capricious and changeable as you are. When Captain Aubrey first arrived, you did nothing but praise him, and press us all to be acquainted with him ; now that we all know and like him, you take every opportunity of finding fault and laughing at him : do explain this."

Fleetwood did not answer for some moments; at last he said, " I wish, Miss Vavasour, to be an example of candour, as I am of every other merit; and, in pursuance of that laudable design, must confess, that it was simply ill-humour—a kind of bilious affection of the mind, which has made me latterly unjust to Aubrey, whose character and society, in cold blood and impartial humour, I esteem and like; but he need not break my head, for I reform from this minute, like the hero of a comedy in the last act."

" I had no idea," replied Olinda, " of the power of my rebuke; but I am delighted to have drawn forth your recantation, and it will give me quite a taste for reprehension in

future, having found it so effectual on the present occasion."

Fleetwood continued to speak of Aubrey, and not only made amends for his past injustice, but talked at last with absolute partiality of him, and appeared to have entirely vanquished the evil spirit that had possessed him in the early part of the evening. When Aubrey returned to his post by Olinda's side, Fleetwood immediately yielded it, and retired with great good-humour.

Those at all disposed to interest themselves in Olinda's walks, had all learned that she daily sought to bring a nosegay from the greenhouse to wear in her hair and bosom in the evening; therefore Captain Aubrey had no difficulty in finding her, on the following afternoon, as she returned loaded with China-roses.

He took that opportunity of making his proposal, with the details of which I shall not trouble you more fully, because he said

nothing very new and brilliant, though he expressed himself very prettily ; and a man in earnest (if he is not a fool) is always eloquent upon any subject that interests him deeply. But nobody cares to hear these sort of professions at second-hand ; and I repeat, Captain Aubrey said nothing but what you, my dear Sir, have said, perhaps very often — though I hope you received a more favourable reply, because that elicited from Olinda was a decided rejection, which though politely expressed, with downcast eyes and blushing cheeks, while she pulled three of her finest China roses to pieces, still it was decided ; so much so, that the gentleman was convinced it would be of no use to return to the charge on some future opportunity. Therefore, when they reached the hall-door, each bowed ; Olinda ran up-stairs in some trepidation, and Captain Aubrey returned to the grounds, and afterwards to the Park, where he walked till the first dinner-bell rang.

Olinda took off her bonnet and sat down. Just then, Lucy bearing a gown on her arm, entered, saying, "Olinda, how shall I have the sleeve trimmed? this way?—or so?"—and then proceeded to state the *pour et contre* of each arrangement; to which Miss Vavasour made no reply. Lucy repeated her question, amplifying her former address, and standing in the attitude of expecting an answer, which at last compelled Olinda to say, mechanically, "I—really—don't know."

"You do not know! why, my dear, you seem to have caught Mr. Thoresby's 'melancholy abstraction.' You do not know! Oh, oh, Miss Vavasour! I see something; and to save you the trouble of denying it—Captain Aubrey has proposed: I see that. Now tell me what was your reply, for that is all I am curious to learn."

"Since you have found me out, Lucy, my reply was a civil *no*, which you might also have guessed, as I was predetermined, and you

knew it. And I was thinking when you came in, how disagreeable it is to say anything people don't like to hear; and how awkward it will be to sit next him at dinner, and with the fear of the company guessing as you did."

"If you do not look conscious, and Captain Aubrey behaves as usual, why should anybody guess anything?"

"Well, I hope they will not; but you will allow it will make the dinner uncomfortable."

The company assembled: Captain Aubrey came last, and things went on pretty well, and without any unusual appearance; but this was because no person was curious on the matter, except Mr. Fleetwood, and he, (the moment he saw Captain Aubrey looking dark and discontented, constrained and silent, and Olinda with a heightened and fixed colour, and something in her manner to Aubrey which seemed to beg his pardon for having tempted him to waste his time,) directly guessed how matters stood between the sailor and his "sometime love."

His conjectures were confirmed by Captain Aubrey lamenting to Lady Portbury that evening, that he had received letters which would compel him to relinquish the great pleasure he had hoped to enjoy in spending another week at Fanover. Lady Portbury combated this resolution with as much graceful earnestness as if she had really wished his stay.

Lord Portbury recited above fifty parallel cases, wherein visitors bent on departure, had been prevailed upon to remain ; and concluded his harangue by saying, “ Olinda, is not this shabby of Captain Aubrey to deprive us of a whole week, which we considered we were quite sure of? do help me to persuade Captain Aubrey.”

Miss Vavasour was choked with horror at the appeal, and desperately stammered some sentences, she knew not what, which were intended to seem as the echo of Lord Portbury's; but of course all entreaty was vain.

Another day, and Olinda had reason to think

that the walk to the green-house was becoming a very popular promenade, for her expedition was scarcely begun, when she was joined by Preston Fleetwood.

“Miss Vavasour,” said he, “I am very much tempted to ask, if you have patience to hear, not a justification of the apparent caprice which prompted me to give two contrary opinions of the same man in the same day, but a frank confession of the feeling which caused my injustice. Will you object to hearing me?”

“As I long since not only gave you leave to speak your frank opinion on all subjects, to advise and find fault, I am only surprised that you think it necessary to apologize, and to go through the form of again asking a permission you had already obtained,” replied Olinda.

“I wished, however, to have it distinctly repeated, because I am going to speak with a freedom that is very likely to displease; I very much wish to say several disagreeable things.”

“ Well, I permit you to follow up this flattering commencement.”

“ When I first asked your leave to become adviser in ordinary, if I know myself, I was only actuated by a sincere wish to be of use, to supply to you the want of judicious friends, of counsellors capable of taking just views of life and human interests ; to which, without any disrespect to your present protectors, they are not competent. Even then, Olinda, I observed your besetting sin was the fault of your humour, and not of your understanding ; vanity, boundless vanity, and the disposition to coquetry, which it generally creates, makes you dependent on those who surround you, subjects you to understandings far inferior to your own, and, to win opinions which are not worth having, you would sacrifice your natural sense of what is right and wrong.”

“ Thank you, Mr. Fleetwood, for your good opinion.”

“ I beseech you to attend to me seriously.

I have your permission to offend. If this one fault could be conquered, all your other qualities deserve praise ; the total absence of envy and design, your kind and generous feelings to others, and care to avoid offending or grieving them, the intelligence and good sense you show on all other occasions, all combine to prove, that if you were not vain, you would be perfect.

“ So far I have spoken of your faults ; I must now confess one of my own. I have for some time been conscious that it is my heavy misfortune to love you deeply, against all the warnings of my reason, and the knowledge of your character and my own, which give the assurance, that such a feeling is of all others adverse to peace and prudence. *That* would have been only a misfortune, but it has influenced me to sin against justice and integrity in endeavouring to prejudice you against other men, particularly Aubrey, who deserves your regard ; and I was hardly aware how far I had

yielded to my wish of crossing his interest till you rebuked me yesterday ; but it has made me resolve to be honest and just at the risk of incurring your ill-will.

“ I have always believed that, however entire frankness may displease, on reflection it is approved, and that every departure from it, though from amiable motives, to spare the sensibility, or to make advice and reprehension palatable to others, somehow is afterwards productive of evil.

‘ For right before there is no precipice—
Fools tread aside, and so their footsteps miss.’

I tell you, therefore, Olinda, that you may trust me when I give general advice, or opinions respecting persons of your own sex ; but you can no longer, I fear, rely on the view I take of those men who try to win your affection : I cannot see them fairly.”

“ In spite, Mr. Fleetwood, of the pains you have taken to define your avowal of what

would have flattered me, I *am* flattered, and *very* vain of *your* loving me."

"So you would be of any other man's attachment, Olinda."

"I do not think you have a right to say so. Surely you cannot suppose I should have listened so quietly, had any other person said all the harsh things that you have spoken in the last ten minutes! You cannot suppose it; though, I confess, they do not seem so harsh to me as you perhaps intended, because the fault (if it is a fault) of wishing to please, does not seem to me a very heinous one. I believe it is common to all women, and to men also: it is natural not to be indifferent to the opinion of those who surround us."

"No, it would not be desirable or right that a woman should ever be so independent of society; it is not the wish to please I condemn, but its intensity--the wish to captivate, and the pains you take to succeed at any expense."

They were here interrupted. People are

often long and frequently offended before they quarrel, but having once quarrelled, the battle recurs perpetually. A lover is sometimes a long time before he says he loves, but having once said, he is very apt to repeat it. In spite of the reluctant and almost reproachful profession of Fleetwood, it was not long ere he again spoke of his attachment, and finding that he was heard with patience, it soon became his favourite topic of discussion with Olinda, and her replies were gradually so satisfactory, that he explained his situation as to pecuniary affairs. It is a pity that those who begin by speaking of love, cannot proceed without speaking of money.

“ So comes the reckoning when the banquet’s o’er,
The dreadful reckoning!—and men smile no more.”

Fleetwood’s situation was briefly this: for the present he had only 300*l.* a-year, but he was to possess an estate producing a clear 1000*l.* a-year, which came through the will

of an uncle, who had the whim of bequeathing the use of the income, till Fleetwood should attain the age of thirty-one, for the benefit of some other relation. In one year Fleetwood would be entitled to take possession, and he wished Olinda to become his wife at that time.

Thirteen hundred a-year was a great falling off from the high conceptions Olinda had been encouraged to form when speculating on her possible destiny ; yet it is quite sufficient for real and reasonable comfort ; and if you tell me it is not so in your estimation, allow me to retort, that he who thinks it is not, would be a good deal puzzled to say what is. He has lost himself in a vortex of unreasonable wishes, "which beget one another like Jews," as Congreve says ; and as many thousands would find him wishing for more.

Fleetwood took great pains to explain to Olinda the style of living that his future fortune would sustain, that she might form a dis-

tinct idea of the situation she was choosing, and know what she would *not* possess; and she heard with perfect content and satisfaction all the abridgement that marriage was to make of the luxury and magnificence that surrounded her at Fanover. She was proud of Fleetwood and his talents—her lot seemed most happy and glorious; in short, she loved him.

They agreed to wait some months before they disclosed their engagement to Lord and Lady Portbury, partly to please Olinda, who thought it would make her situation awkward, and partly to avoid the opposition that Lady Portbury, at least, would offer to such a project, which she would think absolute madness in Olinda. Fleetwood laid down a plan for her studies, and made her promise to write to him constantly; and shortly after his professional business recalled him to London.

Miss Vavasour sighed, as in duty bound, and kept all his injunctions sacred—such as reading several dry histories, and many other

books, which did not interest her, except as enabling her to give him an account of the contents, and the impression they made upon her. In his replies he corrected her opinions, and sometimes her grammar; explained and commented on various facts and passages, and did, in fact, a great deal to the improvement of her education. Fleetwood, however, had not received a religious education; his opinions on that subject were sceptical at least; consequently higher motives for conduct than prudence, propriety, and temporal advantage suggest, he never adverted to, and the lessons she had received in her youth grew every day more faint in her mind.

It is not unusual for men of fashion to say they make it a rule to attend the Church when in the country, "in order to give their servants and tenants a good example;" as if their example in town went for nothing, and religion and piety were only to be thought of at a "*convenient season*." In compliance with

these exalted ideas of duty, Lord Portbury did with immense fuss give “dreadful note of early preparation” every Sunday morning, and, heading all the inhabitants of Fanover that could be pressed into the service, proceeded to the Parish Church, from which, on his return, he invited the clergyman to dinner, and not unfrequently extracted Mr. Spriggins from the large brick house opposite the church, where there is a handsome iron-gate to the court, and seven straight poplar-trees within it: you have passed it a thousand times.

In this pious pilgrimage Lady Portbury did not join above twice in the summer, when she arrived about the time of reading the second lesson, dressed in a pelisse of the first order, and a bonnet emanating from Madame Herbault. All the females’ eyes that had not been open more than forty years were immediately riveted on her and her bonnet; and the hearts appending to the eyes, (as in females they generally do,) beat with tumultuous admira-

tion or envy, according to the prevailing disposition of the possessor.

If this scene took place around the crimson-lined pew of Lady Portbury, a similar temptation was offered, in the gallery, from that which contained the company from the housekeepers' room at Fanover. While Lady Portbury glided slowly up the middle aisle below, Mrs. Shuldham seated herself with an authoritative flounce in the gallery above, having rendered her costume nearly a fac-simile of that exhibited by her lady, and was viewed with similar feelings by a less distinguished audience. These "angel visits" were "so few and far between," that their influence on the parish was not diminished as they might have been by more frequent recurrence.

Of a Sunday evening Lord Portbury would sometimes turn his head from the card-table to say, "Come, Olinda, or come, Lucy, as it is *Sunday*, give us a little sacred music." So they began with "*Adeste Fideles*" and end-

ed with Moore's Melodies; Lord Portbury concluding the day with an observation, "that, in his idea, Sunday could not be too strictly kept. I may be thought too exact on these subjects, but it is the duty of everybody at the head of a large family to stem the torrent of vice and immorality which is rapidly extending itself all over Europe. In my idea, Church and State go hand-in-hand; touch one, you pull down the other. I remember my grand-uncle, Sir Hildebrand Sawyer, who was a very pious man, used to say—by the by, the chapel at Sawyerby Hall was lined with gilt leather, and it had an excellent effect; I hardly ever saw any thing of the kind so handsome and suitable. It was exceedingly impressive to see the chapel at Sawyerby Hall! Certainly it was a shameful thing of my cousin, Sir John Sawyer, to part with Sawyerby Hall! When I first heard of it, I rode over directly. The most wrong-headed fellow!—I talked to him for more

than three hours, without ceasing for an instant—not for a *single* instant! He fidgeted a good deal, and sometimes cracked his whip: at last he became quiet, and seemed attentive; and when I stopped, quite fatigued, to ask for a glass of wine, do you know, he was fast asleep!—Spriggins, was not the land sold for much less than its value to an Indian?—absolutely a man of colour!”

“Dear Lord Portbury, let the girls pass! I am sure *they* will be *without* colour if we don’t go to bed. We were up late last night, I am sure, and I have quantities of things to do to-morrow.”

The whole company blessed the timely interruption, and hastened to their respective couches.

CHAPTER VI.

IF when Lord Portbury thus attempted, as he called it, “to stem the torrent of vice, &c.” by what he considered a strict observance of the Sunday, his sacrifices were so little intrusive on his general habits, it is not to be supposed that those other six days of the week, which he considered might be lawfully dedicated to this world’s cares and pleasures, without any pious interruption, were likely to call Olinda to serious reflection. On the contrary, every circumstance of her present mode of living seemed so independent of any world but the present one, that there seemed no occasion to think of the

future at all; and it rarely happens that young persons keep in mind for a length of time that which all around them seem to forget, unless they are of a more steady character than Olinda.

Lucy, to whom she had confided her engagement, was very glad to see that Olinda's future was likely to be passed with a clever and honourable man, removed from the temptations of fashion and wealth, yet affluent enough to command the comforts of life, and that degree of liberty and leisure which is essential to its enjoyment: she applauded her friend for having selected the object of her real preference, instead of being guided by the vanities of others, who thought their friends ought only to be happy with the baubles their own hearts are set on.

Lucy's choice had now been declared "a settled thing." Mr. Watson had taken possession of the parsonage, had dug, drained, and weeded, painted, glazed, and papered, and was beginning the preparations for his bride's reception. Lucy had selected the materials for her

very modest *trousseau*: that word, which in general conveys the idea of laces, shawls, and diamonds—of expense, indecision and worry—in this instance had required for its provision little more than half the hundred pounds with which Lord Portbury had presented Lucy for that purpose.

Lady Portbury, for whose inspection Miss Boyd had offered some of her more important purchases, said little on the subject; but when alone with Olinda afterwards she exclaimed, “Heavens, it is really too horrible! After all, Lucy Boyd on one side is well born. I am sure it would be better even to have died an old maid than to have made such a poking match. The idea of being married in an English shawl! Really it’s quite disgraceful! Why, Shuldham would not be married in an English shawl. Ring for Shuldham, Olinda; I will prevent that wretched Lucy from doing any thing so truly preposterous; I will give her one of mine.”

The shawls passed in review, and Lady Portbury selected one, and dismissed Shuldham ; but continued to bewail Lucy's fate in the most pitying manner, with an occasional dash of indignation at Lord Portbury for not having said at once, like Frederick of Prussia, when he heard M. D'Argens was *actually* married, "*C'est une extravagance que je ne souffrirai pas.*"

"And her bonnet, Olinda ! she is going to make her own wedding bonnet, poor creature ! The idea of making one's own wedding bonnet ! What is to become of her ? see what it is to be ugly and vulgar-looking ! Not that Lucy is ugly ;—and at least she might have married General Toddle ; and he had made an immense fortune in India, and could not beat her as he did his first two wives, because he is quite *perclus* with the gout ; so she would have had her own way in most things, and he is fully eighty-four :—I cannot think why she would not marry General Toddle ?"

Miss Vavasour could not join in Lady Portbury's regret that Lucy had missed the opportunity of becoming Mrs. Toddle; but the lament grew more interesting when she said, "Well, Olinda, at least *you* will not marry some hoggish man one has never heard of; *you* will have a different sort of establishment."

"Perhaps not," said Olinda, blushing.

"Why," said Lady Portbury, "you do not mean to say you could endure such a fate? Think of looking to all the details of a small house, doing all for one's self that a house-keeper should do, travelling in a stage-coach; there is no knowing all the *horreurs* that Lucy will be compelled to endure."

Olinda felt an unpleasant sensation, and thought of the moment when she should be obliged to own her intention of becoming Mrs. Fleetwood. How inexplicable it is, thought she, that one may not be allowed to be contented with one's own choice, but that everybody expects his neighbour to see with his spectacles!

Lucy laughed when she heard how thoroughly Lady Portbury despised her lot. "However," said she, "her contempt has produced a gift that delights me, and which the poor curate's wife had no right to expect : I shall enjoy having an Indian shawl, of all things. Poor Lady Portbury ! how very good-natured of her to give it at a time when I know she scarce considers me worthy to live !"

The day being fixed for Lucy's marriage, Olinda was to attend her as bridesmaid, and Lord Portbury to give her away. Old Mr. Johnson was to perform the ceremony, his wife to chaperon the ladies, the Clitheros to look on.

The whole proceeding was so repugnant to Lady Portbury's feelings, that she never thought of being present ; but had she been able to master them, there were some particular objections which would have proved insurmountable. The hour—could she have been at the parish church at ten ? the bridegroom—a curate !—was she to stand by when Miss Boyd agreed

to honour and obey a curate? The company—Clitheros and Johnsons—impossible! It was not to be thought of.

Lucy wished to have the ceremony as private as possible, and the only other person invited was Mr. Thoresby, who having been so long and intimately known to both parties, and considered almost as part of the family at Fanover, Mr. Watson had requested the pleasure of his company, to the great embarrassment of that sensitive person, who as usual had recourse to Olinda for advice how to act in what he was pleased to term “his embarrassing position.”

“Dear Mr. Thoresby,” cried Olinda, “what is your position?”

“Why, Miss Vavasour, poor Watson has absolutely asked me to his wedding!”

“Well, you will come, of course.”

“That is precisely what I wished to consult you upon. To a friend on whose delicate sense of propriety I can rely, who can feel what is due to the sensibility of all parties, it is abso-

lutely necessary I should appeal, that I may be enabled to avoid wounding the heart of Miss Boyd on so trying an occasion."

"Oh, you may be quite certain that Mr. Watson has consulted Lucy first, and I am certain she can only feel satisfaction in the attendance of an old friend like yourself."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Vavasour; I cannot have that cheering certainty. It is painful—it may perhaps seem vain in me to recall to your mind a discovery, a most unpleasing and fatal discovery I made some weeks since, of the attachment that poor Miss Boyd felt—towards—myself."

"Bless me, Mr. Thoresby, is it possible you still retain that very odd fancy! Do you, can you suppose that Lucy, on the eve of marrying a man of her own choice, could prefer you?"

Vainly did Olinda combat with the self-complacency of Mr. Thoresby to the last minute; she saw that in his own mind he had determined

that Lucy had espoused Mr. Watson from no higher interest than pique at his insensibility.

However, he was at last persuaded to attend the marriage, as he had in fact always intended to do ; for his communication with Olinda on that subject was only made to procure an opportunity of deploring his own unfortunate attractions. Indeed, he looked forward with much pleasure to the peculiarities which he expected would mark the bride's agitation when he made his appearance, and the perplexity which he made no doubt would in consequence be depicted in the countenance of the bridegroom.

To the learned in the etiquette of bridal ceremony, it is well known, that if you are rich and great, you must borrow a friend's house in which to spend your honeymoon, to which you depart in a chariot and four.

If you are a very private gentleman, you may on that occasion go to see the Lakes in a chaise and pair, instead of the former expensive and distinguished arrangement ; and if you have

any luck, you will in your search after the picturesque, stand in such heavy showers of rain, in that land of the mountain and the flood, that your bride will have an opportunity of seeing as good a cascade from the brim of your hat, as that which

“ Comes down at Lodore,”

and her new pelisse will close its short career under the pelting of the pitiless storm.

There is a third approved method, of adjourning from the church to the inn at Salt Hill, which is more favourable to your coat, but less so to your pocket.

If you are a tradesman, it will be sufficient to put on new topped-boots, and, taking the bride and female party in smart array, proceed to Hampton Court, where you may see the Cartoons, and dine at the Toy; making the journey in a series of gigs and a glass-coach.

But there are exceptions to every rule, and by none of these expedients did the Watsons celebrate their nuptials.

Lord Portbury's carriage deposited them at the vicarage, where they dined with Lucy's old friends, and then departed to take possession of the parsonage, in that identical pony-chaise which has already been so often commemorated.

Mr. Thoresby was much disappointed at the quiet and matter-of-fact manner in which he was received. He was furnished with a *flacon de sels musqués*, which he had designed to present in case Lucy fainted; bearing in mind Madame de Genlis' assertion, that an Englishwoman in affliction always holds a bottle of salts in her hand. I confess I have witnessed such consolation sought by the mourner many years since, but modern sensibility is contented with a sprinkling of Eau de Cologne, and here there was no need of either.

Lucy did not quit the protection of Lord Portbury without offering an adieu full of fervent gratitude; and Lord Portbury bade her adieu with much feeling and kindness,

though it interrupted a story, or rather a collection of stories, which he began to tell at Fanover, and (only pausing while the marriage and consequent adieus were taking place) continued during the drive to and from the vicarage; so, though a large audience had the first fruits of his discourse, (which only ended on their return to Fanover,) the peroration was the exclusive benefit of Olinda and Mr. Thoresby; the first civilly exclaiming "No!—really!—dear me!" and other indications of lady-like surprise and interest; Mr. Thoresby only contributing an occasional hem! or ha! for he considered the space of his drive should be devoted to the Muse; and he travelled through the composition of half a sonnet with tolerable comfort to himself, in spite of the information Lord Portbury was pouring forth.

The marriage of Lucy was disadvantageous to Olinda: she not only lost an amiable companion, but the only person who thought *sane-ly* and acted consequently; who could neither

be dazzled, laughed, or awed out of any opinion or line of conduct she thought it right to pursue; the only counterweight to the egregious folly and vanity of the rest of the society.

It would not be quite fair to consider Lucy so entirely Olinda's superior as circumstances sometimes made her appear. In scanning human merit, some charitable allowance must be made for human temptation; we should not judge the opinions uttered by a friend who had just drunk two bottles of champagne, with the same scrutinizing severity as if his potation had been spring-water; and there are some qualities which intoxicate the possessor more completely than champagne, and unhappily there are no intervals to sleep off this intoxication. What the gift of beauty is in female eyes, we may judge by the declaration ascribed to the woman of our own time who indisputably was possessed of more talent than any one of her sex could ever boast—" *Je donneroïs tout mon esprit pour être belle.*"

Fleetwood and Lucy being now removed, Olinda was thrown more into conversation with the rest of the society ; she talked more to the men, and offended the young ladies more than she had yet done.

The person most disposed to dislike Miss Vavasour was Lady Maria : she became greatly irritated, on this her second visit, to find Olinda more *en evidence* than she had left her ; and Sir John Creswell, whom Lady Portbury had civilly invited as soon as she expected Lady Maria, had relapsed into his original admiration.

Men are fully as envious as women of each other's personal qualities, but I fear the softer sex is the most spiteful ; not, perhaps, from a taste for petty aggression, but from a position in the world which limits their vengeance to small injuries.

The first retaliation that occurred to Lady Maria was a contemptuous manner of treating Olinda as an inferior, which she would have

been too well-bred to have done unless greatly irritated. Olinda was too good-humoured, and too well satisfied with herself, to be angry. She saw Lady Maria disliked her, and that was all: she rather avoided talking to her, but neither showed nor felt resentment. The rival beauty grew more provoked, and more ill-bred, and occasionally said things so rude, and so angrily expressed, that Olinda caught the infection, and began, in her turn, to feel some enmity to her foe.

“ Lady Maria shall find,” said she, internally, “ that her rudeness will not frighten me from talking to Sir John Creswell;” and she encouraged him to converse with her. He was sensible of the effect, but did not see the cause, of a complaisance which very much flattered him: he therefore modestly attributed to his own extraordinary merit the increased attention with which Olinda received him, and, in consequence, grew more in love with her and with himself.

Things were in this position, every body breathing love or war, when one of the many sketch-takers with which the house abounded, produced a view of a ruin about ten miles off, called Worgham Abbey, which struck every body as the representation of a most beautiful scene. Several of the company expressed a wish to see it, and Lord Portbury proposed they should make a party and dine there. This was an alarming proposition to Lady Portbury, who was a sworn enemy to rain, dust, wind, and all elemental accidents: she equally abhorred riding, walking, climbing, staring *for*, rather than *at*, distant objects—losing the party—whooping to call them, and listening for their whooping reply. In short, all the ills that a gipsy-party is “heir to,” rushed on her apprehensive mind, and filled it with dismay.

Some of the gentlemen, as well as ladies, sympathised in her alarms: but the house contained so very large a party of restless young

people, who were willing to go any where, and eager to see any thing, that she made up her mind, and desired the cook might prepare innumerable fowls, lobster-salads, &c. for the next afternoon; and these rural necessities, with many others, were despatched to Worg-ham Abbey early the next morning. The company were to follow in the afternoon.

All who have any experience in parties of pleasure, know that three in a dozen of its members, — say A. B. C. — consider it a matter of vital importance to sit, eat, and walk next D. E. and F.; it is equally well known, that G. H. I. may, from particular malice, or the rest of the alphabet from accidental intervention, destroy this intended felicity; and that the least evil that ensues, will be A. B. C. and D. E. F. continuing through the day in that “mood of the mind” which your *femme de chambre* terms *miff*, a school-boy calls *huff*, and ladies deem low spirits; which unfortunate depression is felt more or

less by the whole party: nay, there are the collateral huffs, such as that of D.'s mamma, who frets that her daughter has not the right beau by her; of E.'s husband, who sees his wife has got the wrong beau, &c.

Unfortunately, these untoward circumstances must occur to human interests; and we cannot guarantee the party to Worgham Abbey from its share of malcontents.

Though Lady Maria considered Lord Sedley her main object, yet, as he preserved a sort of neutrality between her and Olinda, and did not yet appear to wish to marry, she considered the necessity for looking after Sir John Creswell as more pressing and immediate; as when she had been last at Fanover he seemed almost her property, and a lover who seems escaping grows of immense value in the eyes of a coquette.

The party were to be divided to fill various vehicles. Lady Maria chose to go in the open barouche with Lady Portbury, who, to oblige

her, had arranged that Sir John was to drive them. M. de St. Mirval, as an agreeable beau, had an inside place; and they took Mr. Danby, because when he went in the same carriage with his wife they were apt to squabble, but to all other women he was very attentive and well-bred.

At three o'clock, when the company assembled, and the carriages were prepared to start, Sir John appeared, saying that he had hurt his hand so much with a tennis-ball, that he dared not offer to drive; but that Sedley was so very desirous to take his place, that he believed he must have bribed the tennis-ball: his hand was bound up with a handkerchief.

He lamented his incapacity with such an appearance of sincerity as satisfied Lady Portbury, who, not choosing to dispossess Mr. St. Mirval and Mr. Danby, said, "But how are you going then, Sir John? we cannot do without you:" to which he replied, "that he was going in Thoresby's gig, who would drive him."

Lady Portbury was satisfied, and considered that so important a substitute as Lord Sedley would be considered as an ample amends to Lady Maria. But the latter did not feel so entirely contented: a certain preoccupation which lurked in Sir John's manner, gave her some slight distrust. She thought, too, that he smiled and bowed with a suspicious alacrity, for a man who felt disappointed.

The astute Sir John knew that Mr. Thoresby was at that moment engaged in driving Mrs. Danby, and repeating his own verses to her with so much *onction*, that it was lucky for that lady's bones that the road to Worg-ham Abbey presented no extraordinary difficulty. Sir John nimbly passing the gig, ran to a jaunting-car, which contained Olinda and some more young people; he quickly obtained a place next her, and secretly applauded his own *sçavoir faire*.

Olinda saw a part, and guessed the rest of what had happened; she did not care for Sir John Creswell, but the preference he had

shown to her over Lady Maria extremely pleased her. She tried to repay him by a little tribute of flattery and attention, which had its full effect. Sir John grew what is technically called *particular*, and Olinda did all that lay in her power to make him believe that he was heard with pleasure and interest. Yet she had no deeper design in so doing, than to reward him for the triumph he had procured her that day.

The party was extremely gay, and they could hardly believe they had gone ten miles when the ruins of Worgham Abbey first met their eyes.

As the car was the most loaded, and the least capable of speed of all the carriages employed on this occasion, it was the last that arrived: the rest of the party had alighted, and were rambling about. How can the dismay of Lady Maria be described! Queen Urraca, when she met the bones

“ Of the friars five,”

whose appearance was to portend her own doom, was infinitely less startled. Nay, "the friars five," when they learned the decree of death with which the "bloody Miramolin" had resolved to close their pious labours, might have heard it with more sang-froid than Lady Maria saw Sir John hand Olinda from the jaunting-car.

Now came the "tug of war." Lady Maria, though in full beauty, and attended by Lord Sedley, felt herself injured and oppressed; and Olinda was proportionably elated, yet took no interest in Sir John himself; and even the satisfaction she derived from his adulation only arose from the proof it seemed to afford that she was so much more charming than Lady Maria. The conviction raised her spirits so much, that she bestowed some leisure moments in flirting with Lord Sedley.

Lady Maria had been too much an idol at home and abroad to restrain her displeasure within due bounds. She endeavoured to dis-

tress her rival by a number of spiteful little speeches, which those who seek are sure to find, and vex Sir John by saying what she thought most likely to mortify and irritate him : in this undertaking she was more successful than in her attack on Miss Vavasour.

As the temper of the latter was good, her vanity intense, and entirely free from any mixture of envy, her anger at Lady Maria was only momentary, while actually sustaining some act of aggression.

Sir John's mind was less happily constituted : he sometimes grew ill-humoured, and on other occasions was entirely disconcerted ; but the chief result of Lady Maria's warfare against him was a great dislike to her, which it gradually produced, and though she saw its progress, she was not sufficiently mistress of her temper to endeavour to avert it.

The members of the party to Worgham Abbey were summoned to a grand debate, as to which way the party should direct their steps

and observation. Lady Portbury, and a few of the least enterprising, arranged themselves with sundry novels, newspapers, and telescopes, in a large tent which had been prepared for their accommodation.

While the servants prepared the dinner in another, some of the young people went to survey the ruins, and others had recourse to the less humane and dignified expedient of fishing in the little river which ran by the Abbey, and were soon deep in the mysteries of flies and gentles.

Mr. Danby was addicted to geology, and always carried a hammer and a blow-pipe about with him. Now everybody knows that a geologist breaks a bit of every stone he passes near, putting it carefully into his pocket, then insisting that several ignorant friends (who do not know chalk from granite) should tell him of what each piece is composed; after hearing their ineffectual guesses with contemptuous laughter, he *submits* the stones to the blow-pipe,

and assures the admiring beholders, that they are turned into a black *slag*; which satisfies every body at once, though the majority go to their graves without knowing what slag means.

Mr. Danby, in obedience to this scientific passion, proceeded to break the stones about the Abbey. Mrs. Danby stayed in the tent with Lady Portbury, where she made several yards of tatting; while Mr. Thoresby repeated his own sonnets, and then sang songs of his own composition, which the listeners assured him were much better than any of Mr. Moore's—an assertion he thought was very just and moderate praise.

Mrs. Danby was a very stupid woman, just pretty enough to be heard with patience when she talked of “unhappy unions,”—“joined, not matched,”—incompatibility, insensibility, error of destiny, &c. to men entirely *désœuvrés*. Having found out that this topic was the most favourable to her style of eloquence, it was the

subject she was most fond of discussing, not so much with females, old or young, or elderly clergymen, but with those persons whose way of thinking seemed to invite such intimate confidence: these were generally young officers, idle men about town, particularly those who had, in her hearing, been called “*sad roués*,” and reckoned “rather wild.”

No sooner had she seen Mr. Thoresby's guitar, heard half a stanza, and above all observed the aspiring and poetic arrangement of his open collar, than it seemed she beheld a volunteer Werter, and she enlisted him in her band of confidants, and frequently enumerated Mr. Danby's faults and her own virtues with great pathos. He lent an attentive ear apparently, and repaid her communication with sentiment and metaphysics; nay, he addressed a very laborious elegy of twenty halting stanzas,—“To an amiable Lady unhappily married,”—till a friend reminded him that it was very old-fashioned to head his poem in this manner, as

such an address enabled the reader to guess what he was going to say, whereas, if the poem is called "Elegy to ——," you are obliged to read it through before you can possibly guess the nature of ——'s afflictions. Mr. Thoresby adopted the advice of this critic with many acknowledgements.

The party that chose to survey the ruins consisted of some of the most youthful and frisky of the chaperons, and all the maiden belles of course: Lady Maria and Miss Vavasour were included; and they proceeded in inimical union to clamber through broken walls, covered with ivy. Those who drew, expressed their admiration of what appeared picturesque; those who were most dull, and therefore chose to be witty, repeated all the ancient and common-place jests upon convents, monasteries, and their inhabitants, which have been in use since the Reformation, and perhaps before.

Lord Sedley wondered what sort of choir had

sung there, adding, "By Jove! I should like to have heard them sing."

Lady Maria said that she thought, after all, it was a pity convents were done away with; it was certainly the best way of disposing of a number of portionless girls who were always in the way in England, and as they could not all be governesses and half-boarders in schools, led an uncertain and disagreeable life as humble companions, and if they were at all pretty, had their heads turned by the flattery of idle and inconsiderate men, who, to pass away a vacant hour, made no scruple of misleading the poor things into thinking themselves goddesses, and perhaps prevented them from accepting matches in their own line, as tradesmen, attorneys, curates, &c.

The short and scornful laugh, flushed cheek, and wandering eye which accompanied this tirade, would have told a duller person than Olinda that it was spoken solely for her bene-

fit; she so understood it, but was only surprised that Lady Maria could suffer her envy to master her politeness so entirely.

Sir John Creswell, who now feared some epigrammatic observation against himself when Lady Maria spoke, listened uneasily, and dared not answer; but Lord Sedley said, if all parents, friends, and guardians took care to have girls so situated taught music properly, had their voices cultivated, and made them perfect mistresses of thorough bass, there could be no difficulty in providing for them, as long as there were so many theatres existing.

This he said in perfect innocence, but Lady Maria, enchanted at what she thought an attempt to second her in mortifying Olinda, laughed triumphantly, and flushed still deeper, little thinking that Lady Mardiston had, by affirming that Lord Sedley's musical talents were undervalued by Lady Maria, entirely secured his heart from her attacks.

After a fatiguing walk, enlivened by many

ebullitions of ill-will, the party once more collected in the tent, and hunger produced a truce.

The scene was beautiful; a bright autumnal sun and mild air, plenty of cloaks and tippetts, allowed the ladies to gaze on the prospect without shuddering with cold—a rare advantage in the contemplation of English scenery !

The table was long, and as Lady Maria and Olinda were seated at the same side, though with several persons between them, Sir John had the comfort of not being under the eye of the former, which enabled him to be gallant with less restraint: he made several of those vague and complimentary professions which young ladies are not *obliged* to consider as serious enough to be discouraged, and which Olinda received with so flattered and flattering a manner as might have misled a man less vain than Sir John Creswell.

Opposite to them sat Mrs. Danby and Mr. Thoresby. She asked for some of the dish

before them, adding, "Very much done, if you please — only think of Mr. Danby liking every thing quite raw ! I declare, I am quite starved at home ; it is so very shocking to be obliged to eat raw meat ! Now, Mr. Thoresby, would you insist upon your wife eating every thing quite raw ?"

Mr. Thoresby exclaimed with terror at the bare supposition that females of refinement could be treated with such indignity. Mrs. Danby sighed and shook her head.

Soon after, somebody admired a phaeton which had been among the carriages that brought the company. Mrs. Danby exclaimed, "Yes, that is a delightful carriage : I wish ours was a phaeton ; but we have but one carriage ; and only think of Mr. Danby, though he knows I like a phaeton, he will always have a chariot ! Now, Mr. Thoresby, would you insist upon your wife always having a chariot ?"

Mr. Thoresby started, and would not disburthen his fork of some cold lamb then sus-

pended on it, till he had expressed his unqualified abhorrence of such unexampled tyranny; adding, "that were he fortunate enough to be a married man, he should only consider himself, and desire to be considered, as the most devoted of his wife's servants." Mrs. Danby sighed and shook her head.

She took Mr. Thoresby's opinion on several more of Mr. Danby's faults, and received an asseveration that he was perfectly free from similar errors.

Meanwhile it was surprising to see how Sir John's attentions grew more marked, and Olinda's manner of receiving them more gracious; yet she looked no farther than the present moment, and wished him to admire, perhaps to love, but had not an idea of his proposing, and was herself determined to marry Fleetwood.

I will not record Sir John's pretty speeches, because they were not a jot better than those Captain Aubrey had spoken a short time since,

perhaps not so good ; but they were new, and therefore welcome. In the midst of a rather encouraging and flattering reply from the lady, she raised her eyes to behold whom Lord Portbury was greeting as a new accession to the company, and beheld—Fleetwood, who she saw had already taken a survey of the party, and was perfectly aware of the nature of her present entertainment.

Vermilion, lake, madder, carmine, and every other shade and sort of known and unknown red, are pale to the varieties in the long and painful blush which this discovery forced into Olinda's fair cheek : she was angry at her own coquetry ; she was angry at Sir John for exciting it, and with Fleetwood for being a witness to it. Fleetwood, being a very dark and pale man, could not conveniently blush, but a little spot of dusky-orange appeared on his cheek, as the nearest approach to that process which anger could produce, and his eye gleamed all manner of dark threats at the self-condemned

Olinda. Her gaiety evaporated directly, and Sir John found her much less agreeable and animated than he had hitherto seen her. Meanwhile, Fleetwood paid his compliments to the more important married ladies of the company, and explained his unexpected visit as proceeding from a journey on business, from which he was returning, and finding he was not far from Fanover, he could not refuse himself the pleasure, &c. He was very kindly received by Lord and Lady Portbury, who prevailed on him to stop for a few days.

In due time he approached Olinda, and addressed her with divers sarcastic compliments on the benefit her looks had derived from the quiet repose of the country.

After a dinner, pleasant to some, and endless to others, as is the case in most large parties; after much champagne and many moderate jokes, and less than moderate puns, from those who undertook to provide wit for the rest; after duetts sung by some who had voices, and

some who had not, the whole company ascended their respective carriages, and the jaunting-car, which had been the most triumphal car in coming found its contents infinitely more pensive and reserved when returning to Fan-over.

CHAPTER VII.

IT availed little to Olinda to receive Sir John Creswell's attentions with indifference *now*, her previous encouragement had done so much to satisfying his vanity, that her change of manner was hardly observed. Vainly did she vow, if she could once civilly rid herself of this man, never again to suffer the least spark of coquetry to appear in her manner in future, to behave with the utmost simplicity and reserve, never to give Fleetwood the slightest reason to find fault. Meanwhile, she saw she must encounter a lecture from him; and her apprehensions were well founded.

Fleetwood began by setting before her the impropriety of endeavouring to attract and engage those over whom she had not any real design, at the time she was affianced to him ; he repeated with great force and truth, all that has ever been said on this subject, and if any thing had hitherto remained unsaid, I believe he brought it forward on this occasion. Had that been all, he would have done well ; but as people who reprove, are apt to grow irritated by the bare enumeration of the offender's delinquencies, he grew angry ; and after beginning as a sensible friend, he concluded like an enraged and jealous lover, with the bitterest reproaches, urged in the most furious manner.

Olinda wept—first excused herself as only guilty of want of reflection, then confessed she was wrong, promised amendment, wept again, but experienced a very disagreeable surprise. She had always imagined, as young ladies often do, that a flood of tears, of the tears of youth and beauty, would atone for any thing, and produce

a surprising effect even on a man who is indifferent—but that on a lover! it was almost too powerful an engine to employ!

She had now an opportunity of observing the extraordinary *sang-froid* with which she would be allowed to weep by Mr. Preston Fleetwood, and was quite alarmed at his stern insensibility to her affliction. It was astonishing—unaccountable. Can all men be so harsh and unrelenting, or is it only his disposition? This was an important consideration, upon which it would be very desirable to satisfy her mind. Moreover, as lovers are more obsequious and humble, it is supposed, than husbands, and Preston, in this chrysalis state of lover, is such a tyrant, what will he be when he attains the dignity, and is, as Congreve says, “beyond measure enlarged into a husband?” This was a frightful subject of meditation.

Yet nothing alarmed Olinda more than his concluding thus:—“Though I think your con-

duct highly reprehensible, yet I beseech you to remember, that should you repent your concessions in my favour, Olinda, — should the destiny offered by any other man seem to promise a life more consonant to your idea of happiness, you will find me ready, at all times, to sacrifice my claim on your regard.”

Olinda wept more abundantly, and gave the assurances called for by this declaration ; and at last appeased her arbitrary lover, though not without retaining an impression, that he would make a most awful and blue-beard-like husband.

This disagreement and its cause produced also some ill effects on Fleetwood’s mind. He had a natural tendency to jealousy and suspicion, which was aggravated by the proof he had received of Miss Vavasour’s coquetry and indiscretion. He grew unjust, and frequently reproached and found fault with her when she had not afforded any reasonable ground for his doing so.

If he entered a room, and found her speaking to any man, particularly if she seemed in gay spirits, the scrutiny of his eye and the coldness of his manner gave her an embarrassed and anxious air, which seemed to him an evidence she had been flirting. When any man spoke to her with an appearance of interest, he examined the manner of each with so much grave attention, that her whole soul was bent on avoiding all offence. She was, therefore, under a sort of constraint in his presence, and thought him rather *exigeant*; and when any person's presence is a constraint, their absence is a kind of relief, little as you may choose to own it to yourself.

Fleetwood, therefore, was frequently able to convict Miss Vavasour of talking and laughing more before he came into the room than afterwards, and this gave him great offence; and though Olinda wished to see him every hour in the day, she was fatigued with watching her own words, and regulating her own

looks. So that, upon the whole, this last visit of Fleetwood did not conduce to the harmony and good understanding of the lovers.

Luckily he could not stay more than a few days; still they both had opportunity, while it lasted, to fret a great deal at each other's proceedings. If either could have mustered patience enough to make the trial—had Olinda persisted long enough in her abstinence from flirting to convince him she was in earnest in renouncing it,—had Fleetwood been content to watch her with unprejudiced eyes till he had satisfied himself, both would have been spared much disquiet: but neither were at that time equal to such an exertion of reason, and he returned to town displeased and distrusting.

Olinda, who was now very anxious for Sir John's departure, out of respect to Fleetwood's will, had avoided giving the former any opportunity of speaking to her apart, and hoped that his apparent *penchant* and visit would

blow over together. But Sir John, who admired himself as much as he could admire another, thought her avoidance was owing to accident, and never dreamed it was possible that she could like another better.

One morning, at post time, there arrived a quantity of new music. After breakfast, Lady Portbury said:—"Come, Olinda, and practise these things: I want so to hear them, and I know they are very difficult."

The ladies repaired to the drawing-room. But a moment afterwards, Lord Portbury entreated his wife to come to the hall-door to view a horse which he was in treaty to purchase; and as it was one of those peculiarly dedicated to Lady Portbury's use, and she was very fastidious respecting their appearance, the examination was likely to be long and minute.

Sir John, who was following Lord Portbury, deserted the horse-committee for a place by the piano-forte, which he held long enough to de-

clare his attachment to Olinda in due form. The lecture of Fleetwood yet rang in her ear. She felt it was an atonement to him, and a relief to her, to refuse Sir John Creswell; and entertaining an erroneous idea that a very kind and complimentary refusal ought to keep a man in good-humour as much as acceptance, she gracefully and politely declined Sir John's offer at once.

Great was her alarm and confusion when she saw him as much irritated as a well-bred man can be, and, perhaps, a little more: he overwhelmed her with reproaches for the encouragement he had previously received, and said all that a vain man under mortification, and an ill-tempered man under disappointment, may be supposed to think and feel; but which, perhaps, he would not have expressed, had he not secretly entertained an idea that his offer did Lord Portbury's portionless cousin a great deal too much honour, and that a refusal from her was insolent and ungrateful.

Though Miss Vavasour's conscience smote her in some degree for her past civility, she could not help considering Sir John's uncourtly vehemence and unmeasured reproaches as more than the offence deserved; for, after all, she could only accuse herself of listening attentively and smiling sweetly; she did not take into the account the *expression* of her manners.

Sir John accused her of more blame than she deserved, and she assigned herself less—the real balance was between. However, she was both shocked, frightened, and mortified by his anger and want of consideration; and when his indignant harangue ceased, she retired to her own chamber, wishing that she had been bred in the Romish faith, that she might instantly enter a nunnery of the strictest rule known, in order to shut the male division of human kind for ever from her sight and hearing.

People must suffer very often from their besetting sin, before they are convinced their suffering arises from their fault, and not from

their misfortune ; and Olinda thought it was her's to have met the most vain, irritable, and unjust of men in Sir John Creswell.

The report of some of the visiters who quitted Fanover at this time, led Fleetwood to guess with tolerable accuracy what had passed there relative to Sir John ; and his letters to Olinda, in the double office of lover and censor, were more filled with what belonged to the latter than the first of these situations : his reproaches and animadversions were severe, and proved as grievous to Olinda's heart as mortifying to her vanity.

For a fortnight, a whole fortnight, did she preserve inviolate the good resolutions she made ; and then she again began to bear with complacency the flatterers of her society. She forgot her late severe lesson, acquitted herself of all fault upon reflection, and began to dread Fleetwood's presence ; not that she had ceased to love him, but she was easier without his constant inspection.

An occasion of visiting Fanover at this time

presenting itself, he came thither, and a few days elapsed without any reproof on his part. But there was something in his manner that she did not feel quite easy in observing.

One day he asked to speak to her, and said, “Olinda, I have said nothing till now on a subject most important to us both, because I would not rashly, and from the impulse of a sudden feeling, decide on a step, and risk repenting it when under a different state of mind. I think I now see with unprejudiced eyes the line I ought to pursue for your welfare and my own peace. In spite of your natural disposition, which is excellent, and of your understanding, which is superior to most young persons of your age, your vanity is so impetuous and overwhelming, that you are not to be depended on. You would not be content in the situation I have to offer; and I tell you honestly, I am naturally distrustful and suspicious—faults probably as likely to make you unhappy, as yours are quite certain to make me miserable.

“ With this conviction, why should I hold a claim on your hand which cannot advance the happiness of either? I have warned you against your errors, and in spite of the interest (and I am quite sensible that you *do* take some interest) in satisfying my mind, you cannot conquer that rage for admiration which mingles in all you say and do. My dear Olinda, you are not aware of the fearful tendency of this fault : if you cannot obtain sufficient self-control to amend it, be assured you will betray and be betrayed ; you will never see what is real in life till too late to avail yourself of the perception.

“ Olinda, I restore to you the power over your own destiny, which I was a few months since so happy as to claim, and which, I fear, you will fatally misuse. Henceforth you are free. As a friend, you will still, perhaps, permit me to counsel—perhaps you will have more confidence in that counsel than when it might be suspected of a bias from selfish feelings ; but be assured my anxiety will be as fervent

and durable for your single interests, as when I once hoped they would be inseparably connected with my own."

Every word Fleetwood uttered seemed to Miss Vavasour as a thunderbolt; she could hardly believe she was awake. The fear of being unable to speak without weeping bitterly, kept her silent a few minutes, and prevented the eager abjuration she was going to make of her faults; but it occurred suddenly to her that promises of amendment would seem as if she wished to avert the relinquishment Fleetwood had so readily made of his right in her heart—it was almost beseeching him not to abandon her. No, the best plan for her was to acquiesce in his quitting her, and to show him by a long course of prudence and reserve, that she had conquered the propensity of which he had complained, even without expecting it would concern him personally; and then what might she not expect from his penitence for the distrust which had induced him to resign her?

He would deserve some alarm for that he had given her ; and when he saw her excellent conduct, though surrounded by admirers ; when he saw her conversing with them——Olinda was even then beginning to coquet in imagination, though unconsciously.

These reflections passed rapidly through her mind, and restored her self-possession. Instead of the humble and conciliating profession she first meditated, she replied firmly, and with a very dignified air, that she entirely approved the frankness and decision with which he acted ; that where persons thought and felt differently, it was not likely their agreement could be durable ; and that as his judgment on her conduct was entirely contrary to her own, even upon reflection, she readily agreed to consider him in future as a *disinterested* friend.

Olinda here would have added some profession of the value she would always have for his opinion, and for him ; some assurance of the regret she felt at offending him ; but she

feared, if she did so, she should say too much ; and she also feared that if she once began to express her “compunctious visitings,” she might not be able to say anything, at all, but be cut off by a violent passion of tears in the flower of her discourse, which would be extremely beneath the dignity of a young lady so lovely and so ill-used.

By this reserve she was enabled to conclude the interview with great appearance of self-possession, and so effect the greatest possible dis-service to her own secret interest ; for Fleetwood, from the ease and insensibility which he thought she displayed on this occasion, was convinced not only that she did not love him, but that she was a heartless young person, and a mere coquette.

He applauded his own strength of mind for resolving on the sacrifice of so ill-placed an attachment ; admired his discernment in reading her heart ; made several severe reflections on the nature of womankind in general—their

vanity, worldliness, and frivolity. He thought of Eve, Dalilah, Jael, Cleopatra, and every treacherous and unworthy woman from their times to the present ; but as he was obliged to mount his horse and ride with Lord Portbury, who very generously poured forth his own recollections upon all subjects, and required an occasional observation in reply, he could not even enjoy his uncharitable musings in peace.

Olinda retired to her room, and wept abundantly. So she had actually lost Fleetwood ! offended him beyond forgiveness ! and for what ? for the pleasure of hearing all sorts of folly talked by all sorts of fools ! She thought of writing a kind of exculpatory letter, reproaching him for his readiness to give her up and believe the worst of her ; but it was beneath her dignity to do so—and he was unreasonable, very unreasonable, and unjust.

Well, he had lost an excellent wife, (and she wept,) and a great beauty, (and she looked in the glass,) but she vowed to herself no man

should ever again have an opportunity of telling her he loved : that was the only point upon which she was entirely resolved. She was to be a model to all future old maids.

But it was impossible to go down to dinner with her hair in disorder, her eyes red and swollen ; Fleetwood must not suppose that he was regretted. She bathed her eyes in rose-water, and took great pains to arrange her hair and dress, which exercise offered a little distraction, and gradually her tears ceased, and she found very slight traces of her grief remained to mar her effect when she joined the company, with a determination to be in very high spirits.

Lord Portbury had that day increased the party that was staying at Fanover by several officers belonging to a regiment quartered in the neighbouring town ; and Miss Vavasour found herself placed between General Carleton and Major Holt, directly opposite to Fleetwood.

As General Carleton had a little bottle put

down by his plate which appeared to contain some strange mixture, and a little silver salt-cellar with some uncommon-looking powder therein, Olinda easily guessed he was an invalid, real or imaginary, and she was but ill-provided with suitable conversation, and saw it would be difficult to have very gay conversation with her neighbour on the right.

Turning to the left, she took a survey of Major Holt: he was one of those agreeable men, who having spent the time they consider best worth remembering always with their regiments, can only remember what was said by Mr. Such-a-one of *ours*, when we were in quarters at such a place. Olinda asked him if he had ridden much about the neighbourhood since his arrival—if he had seen Worgham Abbey? To which he replied, “that he intended to go there, but it must be a fine ruin indeed if it was equal to one in the neighbourhood of Ballinasloe, called Kilmagarry, where the officers of *our* regiment used to give public

breakfasts to the young ladies of that neighbourhood,—particularly to the Miss Dawes—nine charming girls ! all life and spirit ! one of them in particular, Angelina, an absolute wit—very superior creature indeed !—the tricks she used to play us !”

A large gold basket, filled with flowers, in the midst of the table, partly intercepted the view which Fleetwood and Olinda might have had of each other, and limited their respective opportunities of investigating each other’s proceedings to casual glances. Fleetwood was content to appear himself, that is, rather sulky and discontented ; but Miss Vavasour thought herself bound in honour to be mirth personified. Foreseeing it would be easy to elicit a long story from Major Holt, she looked so delighted with his description of the Kilmagarry festivities, and questioned him with so much interest respecting Miss Angelina Dawe, that he favoured her with all the anecdotes of that gifted person his memory afforded.

“ Oh ! she was the merriest girl ! You might hear her laugh a mile off. When some fellows of *ours* were visiting her father of a morning, when they looked for their hats, they were sure to find them full of sand, their feathers cut to pieces, and perhaps a jug of water poured upon their heads when they were going to mount their horses. Never saw such a clever girl in my life !—most talented creature ! She would hunt !—ride *any* horse without a saddle ! A cricket-player !—stand to her bat for hours, and never get bowled out ! Never saw such a talented creature !

“ And Rosabella Dawe was almost as clever. I have seen her land a salmon that weighed fourteen pounds as if it was a minnow !—shoot half a dozen swallows flying ! And yet Mrs. Dawe often told me, her daughters’ education had never cost her a single farthing ! Never taught any thing — picked it up by themselves ! And you know, Miss Vavasour, what nonsense and fuss mothers in general

make about governesses and masters. Well, I assure you, Mrs. Dawe always said, she should have been quite ashamed to put Mr. Dawe to such an expense as educating nine young ladies would have been ; so she let them educate themselves, and gave herself no sort of uneasiness.

“ She was a very superior woman, Mrs. Dawe ; and they all turned out perfectly well, except, indeed, Annette Seraphina. She ran away with the riding-master of our regiment ; but old Dawe was after them directly, and brought her back. It blew over. She was a quiet lump of a girl, not as clever as the rest ; and, as Mrs. Dawe said, ‘ Girls will be girls, and you can’t put an old head on young shoulders ; and you know, Holt,’ she said, ‘ girls seldom run away *twice*. I dare say Annette Seraphina will be wiser another time.’ Mrs. Dawe was so sensible and quiet ; she took every thing as it came.”

During this speech, or rather harangue, of

Major Holt's, Olinda, by a frequent hysterical laugh, and commendatory ejaculation, seemed enchanted with the Dawe memoirs, though a very small part of Major Holt's conversation in reality was heard and understood by her ; but her manner of listening was very good pantomimic acting.

Fleetwood felt provoked at her behaviour : he attributed to coquetry and indifference that which was really the effect of pique and mortification.

A man will sometimes admit that mankind do not know themselves, but he reckons himself an exception from the rule ; and few have an idea how imperfect our knowledge of our neighbours' characters must always be. Life itself is an education—a course of instruction. Each event that interests us is a process of experience, by which our dispositions are sometimes entirely changed, often gradually affected, perhaps always in some degree.

A man who in early youth is giddy, in-

discreet, and confiding, may suffer so much from these qualities, as to obtain in maturer age the reputation of being cunning, reserved, or prudent. Our minds are changed, like our faces, by time; and we can no more expect to have our friend's way of thinking and temper the same at the end of ten years, than we can expect to see him look the same.

“ When Time's transmuting hand shall turn
Those locks of gold to silvery wires,
Those starry eyes must cease to burn
As now with more than heavenly fires.”

How often, if some superior intelligence would predict our conduct on some distant future occasion, we should reply, like Hazael, “ Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing !” How differently, on reflection, does every candid being judge his own conduct in former scenes, to what he thought while those scenes were passing.

May not Olinda hereafter lose her coquetry, as she has now lost her simplicity, and be quite

a different woman ten years hence?—These reflections, followed by this inference, brought Fleetwood into better humour; for, like all jealous persons, he was subject to alternate fits of affection and disapprobation; and when either was unusually keen, the reaction kept pace with it. However, he resolved to let her natural disposition fight with its temptations before he again essayed a word of interference, even as a *friend*; and for any other interference, “never more,” &c.

Here followed a plentiful stock of the most vigorous good resolutions on his side of the table, while Miss Vavasour, catching the appearance of thought on his countenance in a rapid *coup-d’œil* taken between two carnations and the handle of the gold basket, said internally:—“So, Mr. Preston Fleetwood, you are not then so entirely *degagé* and indifferent as you would try to make me believe. How I will make you repent this insubordination before I forgive, and we are again friends!

Of course this *will* pass by, and we shall be friends. It is impossible he can resolve on giving me up so readily; it is not natural: no man can do so. Of course, next week—but he shall beg pardon for his injustice and harshness. Still I do not like his looks:—how very unfeeling, when he knows how I must be grieved! To be eating truffles, when he saw me weep!—to talk of Rome and Naples to Mr. Danby! Men are all brutes—no feeling! I will not forgive him for five weeks—perhaps not so soon!”

But Olinda had leisure to form and reform her plans; time wore away, and her forgiveness was not sought: nay, Fleetwood actually completed his visit and returned to London, without having given her an opportunity of executing her various schemes of vengeance, without her obtaining from him one word of more distinguishing interest than might have been addressed to his great-grandmother.

Miss Vavasour remained sad, angry, and full

of self-reproach. She remained, and so did several young men, who were neither sad nor angry, but very anxious to make themselves agreeable to her; and strange to say, contrary to all the "fixed and settled rules" of romance for the government of the heart and affections in the absence of a beloved object, Olinda pleased, and was pleased to please.

For one week, indeed, she thought, Of what use is it to engage any heart but Preston Fleetwood's? A few days afterwards, she considered he was very unreasonable, and rather too rigid in his ways of thinking. Why should that fault of his make her condemn herself? Then of what use is it to fret for what you can't help? When this reflection occurs to any mind, the proprietor may be assured he or she is more than half consoled: it is the last drop of the shower.

Then she wished Fleetwood could see the submission and admiration of the men at present round her; what an example for, what a

reproach to him! Would it not alarm and make him try to save the portion of her regard he had so lately appeared highly to value? She often pondered on the possibility of bringing him back by an acute fit of jealousy, and resolved the pretensions of various beaux should become the instruments of this infliction.

Miss Vavasour forgot how heartily she had repented the encouragement bestowed on Sir John Creswell, and the many vows she had made against repeating the experiment; and now speculated on the wish Fleetwood might have in her remaining single. She thought that he saw some splendid establishment offered by some man sufficiently pleasing to save her from incurring the imputation of marrying for money: he could, would certainly be tempted to try to dissuade her from accepting what would place an eternal bar between her and himself; he would re-assert a claim resigned in sudden pique.

Suppose Lord Sedley, who always paid her

great attention, was to propose, what would Fleetwood say? Lord Sedley's visits to Fanover were frequent; he would not probably die of grief if refused; and he was much better tempered than Sir John Creswell—in fact, a creditable lover for any girl: it would certainly look alarming to Fleetwood to read in the *Morning Post*,

“A treaty of marriage is said to be on the tapis between Lord Sedley and the beautiful Miss Vavasour, a near relation of the Earl of Portbury.”

Surely it would frighten him! He would write, or perhaps come down to Fanover to entreat for pardon; she would make him sensible of his past folly; he would swear never to feel distrust and jealousy again without due provocation, and she would, after a decent interval of penitence, forgive and marry him. Their future life would be all the more happy for a little trial, which would cure him of unjust suspicion, and her of all wish to charm any other man.

This plan was dramatic; it would close a comedy admirably, but in real life catastrophes are not always complete and satisfactory. However, the private meditations of Olinda were much soothed by the sketches she drew in her own mind of the letters of passionate apology she should receive from Fleetwood, and of the sensible apophthegms with which she would intersperse the short sermons she meant to address to him on the subject of his faults.

Such speculations beguiled her solitary walks, and sometimes made her absent and dull in society. But Lord Sedley was more graciously received from their influence; she viewed him as an angler contemplates a good fly-rod, with which he hopes to land the finest trout in the stream.

Lord Sedley was a fair, slight young man, without much countenance, with the animal vivacity and cheerfulness that youth and health usually bestow; perfectly good-humoured, having the obliging and graceful manner of

one educated in good society ; but silly, trifling, and vain — defects which in the early part of life are seen with more indulgence than when standing forth in the salient prominence they acquire from years. He admired Olinda as much as any one did ; and though being of a pliant disposition, and vehemently pursued by many young ladies who desired to become Lady Sedley, his attentions were sometimes forcibly diverted into other channels when he obtained a moment of free will and opportunity, he showed her decided preference, and his visits to Fanover Castle were more frequent, since she became a part of the family.

The autumn passed rapidly without producing any great change in the sentiments of Lord Portbury's society

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTMAS filled all the vacant chambers of Fanover ; winter walks tinged with unwelcome rose the fairest noses that dared to encounter the cold and eastern blast, even enveloped in black lace, and the proprietors fortified with ermine and sable. The gentlemen often preferred the billiard-room, and the most leisurely dawdling in the stable, to a more varied excursion. The small birds hopped near the buildings with blank eye and ruffled plumage. The whole society of the castle felt more ennui, and inspected each other's looks, manners, and mind, with a keener desire to disapprove, than during the careless hours of a more genial season.

When the post-bag arrived, Olinda sent a curious glance to Lord Portbury's share of the arrival, after she saw her own contained nothing she wished to see. One day a letter was brought her, which, being folded square, like a gentleman's letter, and not the fatal oblong dispatch of a dun (which often excites nearly as much agitation in the bosom of the indigent fair), seemed directed in a free bold hand. Olinda, before Lord Portbury (whose custom it was to distribute the letters) had even ascertained the address, already ruminated on the answer she should give. She would make him wait a few days for it; she would make him some well-deserved reproaches; she would not forgive him directly—this would make him more careful in future of offending.

She opened the letter, and the words *Bill delivered*, which headed the paper, unfitted her even to mourn over the scanty notices it contained, of forgotten Levantines, and unpaid for Gros de Naples. After all, it was a

mercier's bill ! Poor Olinda ! this disappointment humbled her ; and the next day, and the next, she looked with less hope and more anxiety to the avenue leading from that lodge by which London visitors approached the castle.

“ Why should I (thought Olinda) be unforgiving ? Five weeks is too long to bear malice to a friend. I will not keep Fleetwood so long in suspense — a fortnight will suffice for my dignity. *I was* in some degree to blame — a fortnight is enough. Heavens ! do I see a yellow hack chaise, covered with mud, coming from the London lodge ? I do ! — one man in it — that must be he ! — Why, this is better than writing. Poor dear Preston ! — it shows his anxiety. I need not, and will not hold out a fortnight ; I will forgive him this evening, — or to-morrow at farthest. Poor Fleetwood ! I hope he will not guess why I walk in this avenue : no, impossible — I will pass the chaise slowly without looking up.”

Suddenly the occupant cried “ Stop !” and a man put his head out of the window — it was crowned not with willows, but a brown scratch wig ;—it was Mr. Spriggins ! who exclaimed, “ Miss Vavasour, Ma’am, I beg ten thousand pardons, but will you allow me to ask if his Lordship is at home to-day ?—something very particular here for his Lordship’s inspection ;” and he pointed to a roll of parchment tied with red tape, and covered with “ *Whereas’s*.”

Olinda wished Mr. Spriggins’s wig at the bottom of a piece of artificial water that skirted the walk ; its calm and sleepy surface seemed to insult her agitation by the contrast. I am not sure that she did not, for an instant, wish poor Mr. Spriggins to accompany his wig ; but if she did, it was a momentary ill-nature. With as civil a smile as could be got up at a short notice, she answered his question, and proceeded sadly on her walk.

Many similar shocks did she receive from incidents in themselves trifling ; but the pain

they inflicted will easily be understood by those who have been anxious and disappointed.

Vanity, in persons of good understanding and dispositions, operates in paroxysms : between the fits, during the humiliation of failure, or the want of excitement, their perception of what is *real* in this life, their judgment on modes of action, and of their own conduct, are as just and complete as if they were not liable to temporary perversion. They feel, like Araspes, the war of a double soul ; and that, to have acted as they did, they “ must have eaten of the insane root that takes the reason prisoner.”

Thus Olinda saw her past folly exactly as the most severe censor or uncharitable foe could have done. But the penalty must be paid, and repentance was of no avail !—at least it was very doubtful that she should again engage Preston Fleetwood.

It seemed very unlikely, when a report reached Fanover that he was paying great attentions to Miss Montresor, an heiress of

great wealth and some beauty, who, it was farther stated, seemed “exceedingly in love with him.”

This was disagreeable intelligence, and not rendered less so by some one of the party exclaiming, “Is he really going to marry Miss Montresor? I declare I used to think sometimes he was in love with Miss Vavasour.”

“Think ! sometimes !” said an echo in Olinda’s heart ; “*only* sometimes !”—The report seemed to acquire more credit every day, till Olinda thought it was time to leave off regretting another girl’s lover.

From the interval of torpor and discontent induced by this conviction, Olinda was aroused one day, after lazily singing the first part of a duet, while Lord Sedley sang the second a little out of tune, by his eager praise of their joint musical effect, which he ended by saying, “By Jove ! Miss Vavasour, you are so good a musician, such an excellent timist, that no man can sing ill who accompanies you : I improve

every day we sing together." He then adverted to her other merits, mental and personal, and closed his eulogy with a formal proposal,—to which Olinda had no opportunity of replying, ere Lady Portbury entered, saying,

"Here is one of my prophecies coming to pass; Preston Fleetwood *is* directly to marry Miss Montresor; I knew he would—he so sensible! and she has seven thousand a-year!"

"But she is ugly," said Lord Sedley, "and not musical!"

"Well, it's quite settled," replied Lady Portbury, "I can assure you."

This intelligence was a shock to Miss Vavasour; in spite of the state of discouragement relative to Fleetwood her mind had previously endured, she was now convinced that all was over.

"You see, my dear Olinda," said Lady Portbury, "the first moment they were alone together,) "you see now the extreme folly of talking, and flirting, and wasting your time with a man entirely out of the question. You

know I always said, Where is the use of talking to Preston Fleetwood? what good will it do? Why, you may be dead of old age before he is Chancellor; and you could not think of marrying him. I always said, &c."

"So that young man is going to be married!" said Lady Grimthorpe: "Why, my dear Miss Vavasour, is he not one of your revolted subjects? do you suffer them to escape this way?"

Lady Juliana Dixon "hoped her heart was not interested in Mr. Fleetwood," adding, "that a man who could prefer Miss Montresor to Olinda, could have *no soul*!"

Colonel Dixon said, "Money does everything in these times; but never mind, Miss Vavasour, there are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught!"

This metaphorical consolation of Colonel Dixon's gave the young lady to whom it was addressed quite as much offence as the animadversions of the matrons.

At first Olinda grieved, but she soon felt mortified at Fleetwood's inconstancy, and began to consider whether Lord Sedley was as foolish as he had seemed to her at the beginning of their acquaintance; and if he was, whether a silly man might not make an obliging husband, an easy companion, a kind friend? To *love* again, was of course out of the question—such a thing was never heard of; but friendship—a marriage of esteem, was possible. She thought she could make an excellent wife to a good-tempered, kind-hearted man, though he was her inferior in understanding. Of course, she should have all the influence a superior mind must always have over a weak one; she should always use it for his advantage, and suggest the wisest line of conduct. It would be a good thing for Lord Sedley if she could make up her mind to become his guide for the future. And what would Preston Fleetwood say? He would be convinced that she did not care for him, and feel a good deal mortified and hum-

bled at finding she could live without him—that she had become indifferent; he would be overwhelmed with repentance when he should see how entirely mistaken his view of her character and disposition would prove; he would see her a model of conduct and prudence—a guardian angel to her husband—a pattern to all her acquaintance.

Olinda's presumption need not excite derision. How is it that, severely as a human being may condemn his past conduct, he never feels a doubt that, in future, it will be most exemplary—never supposes it possible that passions may again mislead, or temptations conquer him? Sometimes, when this sanguine estimate of her future virtues struck her mind, she would doubt whether she could be happy with a man her inferior in understanding. Then she remembered, that Lady Portbury seemed perfectly happy solely from riches and situation; why should not the same materials produce happiness for her?

She is soon persuaded who persuades herself; and Olinda made up her mind to accept Lord Sedley.

Parliament had met; Lord Portbury's family returned to town, and every thing conspired to put Miss Vavasour in good-humour with her late resolution,—the congratulations of Lady Portbury, and the reverence always paid to those who seem fortunate. One moment of triumph she particularly anticipated,—that in which she should inform Fleetwood of her intended marriage.

She did inform him; and Fleetwood heard it without any apparent agitation—with gravity—perhaps sadness. He appeared to consider what she had said for a few moments, and then offered many good wishes, expressed with warm interest, with some solemnity, without the distance that had for some time shaded his manner.

“ I could have wished,” he concluded, “ that the man whom you chose, my dear Olinda,

had been of a character more likely to subjugate yours. You will require, for some years, a guide — a *ruler* ; but Sedley is kind-hearted — gentleman-like in feeling, I should think ; and he is your *choice*.”

Olinda had expected that he would make some reflections to the disadvantage of Lord Sedley ; she was touched with the directness and simplicity of Fleetwood’s manner, and felt so great a disposition to weep, that she was obliged to recollect he was Miss Montresor’s lover, and therefore said, with forced flippancy :

“ Well, I mean to make a very good wife ; so, when Miss Montresor is Mrs. Fleetwood, I know you will let us be friends, and not fear evil communication.”

“ Miss Montresor would not, I suspect,” replied Fleetwood calmly, “ be much flattered at having it supposed that she should draw so humble a lot in life ; and most assuredly it never occurred to me to wish she should.

Marriage must, in your eyes, resemble a quadrille ;—no sooner have you found a partner, than you seek for a *vis-à-vis*."

"Is it not true, then," said Olinda, "that you—that Miss Montresor—I thought—people say—we all heard?"

"If there was such a report," said Fleetwood, without noticing her confusion, "it is as entirely unfounded as any report of the kind ever was ; *c'est beaucoup dire*."

Olinda coloured, and began to speak incoherently enough upon some other subject ; to which Fleetwood replied in so grave and matter-of-fact a manner, that pure shame at being affected by a discourse in which he was so composed, restored her self-possession.

Why should we dwell on white satin blonde and plum-cake, silver-knots and orange-flowers ? All these things contributed their interest to this civil and religious contract. Entreaty and reproach were lavished on tardy shoemakers and idle mantua-makers, who, in

return, exhausted every variety of lying excuse to restrain the torrent of invective poured out against them.

All the younger brothers and idle men in London, who had ever thought Olinda handsome, or heard her reckoned so, now assured her, with deep sighs, that if they had had 50,000*l.* a-year, they would long since have laid it at her feet : but elder brothers, and men who considered themselves of importance in female eyes, contented themselves with less emphatic sighs, and the observation “ that Sedley was a happy man.”

All the elderly matrons who had not daughters, now discovered that Olinda was a very lovely girl, of whom each had always predicted that she would make a very good match. Those who had daughters retained their original opinion, “ that she was pert, dull, conceited, plain, &c.” adding, “ that Lord Sedley must be mad, or silly, &c.” Every body

remembered some fault of conduct and character in every person of the name of Vavasour whom they had seen or heard of, and all predicted, that such faults would, if they did not already, appear in Olinda. Indications of every vice and folly under heaven were seen in her features and heard in her voice, and pointed out by friendly warnings to Lord Sedley, or his near relations.

A large division of society solaced their ill-nature, and that of their friends, by assuring each other, that such a marriage was impossible; that they knew, for a fact, that there was not the slightest idea of marriage in Lord Sedley's head; that he was deeply attached to another person, and had told them he rather disliked Olinda.

Some of the most active enviers wrote pressing accounts of Lord Sedley's danger to Lady Mardiston, advising her by all means to prevent the success of Miss Vavasour's artifices:

but this measure, though holding forth a greater prospect of success than any other that could have been adopted, failed.

Lady Mardiston, like many other clever persons, and many more foolish ones, always considered *her* view of things the only just one, and seldom thought of revising it. She had settled, that the person most to be feared as a sister-in-law, was Lady Maria; that Olinda was a little simple girl, who had not brains, or wilfulness enough to be dangerous. *She* had a thorough knowledge of her brother's character, and knew what to fear. Then, were she to quit General Cartwright now, whose health and temper grew every hour more critical, she might lose the fruit of four months of slavish attention. The same warnings as now reached her, had poured in the year before, respecting a young girl whom Lord Sedley had not admired at all. Lady Mardiston resolved to remain at Nice.

The preparations for the marriage proceeded

rapidly. Miss Vavasour had sometimes moments of misgiving : she began to wish people should admire Lord Sedley ; to watch with interest his replies, and the effect they produced on the hearers ; and when, as frequently happened, they were not exactly what she had wished, how earnestly she longed to retrench some words, to explain others ! Sometimes she longed to persuade herself and the listeners that they had mistaken what he said ; and she blushed and sighed painfully when she detected that almost imperceptible expression, which will pierce through the mask of good breeding occasionally, when the evidence of our neighbours' folly is forced upon us.

Already the leaven of humiliation mixed with the vain pleasure which she had expected rank and riches would supply. Like Haman, vexation at the want of the gratification withheld destroyed the enjoyment of what was granted. She was sorry for Lord Sedley ; he was good-looking, good-humoured, obliging, and very

much in love: all the other girls, she saw, wanted to marry him. It was not absolutely necessary a man should be sensible; Lady Portbury was happy with one very much his inferior. In the comparison of the men, Olinda had the humility to forget to compare the women and their tastes—to consider that what made Lady Portbury happy might not have the same effect for her; and “*que c’est par avoir ce qu’on aime qu’on est heureux, non par avoir ce que les autres trouvent aimable.*”

CHAPTER IX.

MISS VAVASOUR felt a slight chill when she repeated the irrevocable replies after the clergyman; she felt the truth of Madame d'Epinay's remark; "*qu'en se mariant on tire un parti du rideau qui cache l'avenir*;" but there was no time to "bolt this matter to the bran." The chariot was ready: Olinda departed for the villa in which her honeymoon was to be spent.

The weather was fine: Lord Sedley admired his bride—the bride admired herself: she sang to him; and he played the violin, as she had every reason to fear he would, extremely ill. She received millions of letters filled with pro-

testations of affection and joy at her marriage : these were written by almost all the people to whom she had ever been introduced ; and the most singular circumstance attending them was that the persons who had disliked and been most rude to, and envious of her, were those who expressed themselves with the most eager and animated affection. The marriage had been what they desired most on earth, and felt sure would take place—they had always wished and frequently foretold it, &c.

Olinda at first smiled contemptuously at the sudden change in her acquaintance ; but in an incredibly short space of time she began to think that their professions were the genuine expression of their feelings, and that she had *fancied* their anterior slights,—so easy is it to ascribe to our own merit the homage which in fact is paid to our situation !

In the long *tête-à-tête* to which custom has consigned a new-married pair, Lord Sedley seemed more sensible than when among other

objects of comparison. There was nothing to humble her vanity, and Olinda was contented. She even argued with her own regrets, and persuaded herself she had made a happier match in accepting Lord Sedley than she would have done in becoming the wife of Preston Fleetwood.

“Surely I must be happier with a man who does not distrust me, who does not seek to read and criticise every feeling of my heart ! If my companion is not clever and sensible, at least he is easy and good-tempered. I need not watch his eye when I speak, to see how he *bears* every sentence. I need not stop in confusion when I see Fleetwood looking thunder-clouds at me. It is much better to hear my husband say, ‘By Jove ! Olinda, you are right,’ than to hear Fleetwood begin, ‘I am sorry, Miss Vavasour, to be forced to observe.’ It is such a comfort not to be obliged to think how one looks, and what will be thought of every word one says. No, Lady Portbury is right :

a sensible man is not the kindest husband ; easy temper, good-humour, and attachment, must be the real materials for happiness in marriages.”

Olinda recalled this conclusion very often to her mind, yet was not always equally struck with its justice. She dwelt with pleasure, however, on such traits of Lord Sedley’s character as seemed to indicate good qualities : not only his devotion to her seemed to bode well for her happiness, but it pleased her to see the strength of his attachment to his sister, of which he gave frequent proofs.

One day, soon after their arrival at his country house, Olinda had been giving some directions to the gardener, when it occurred to her that one of the flower-beds under the windows might be altered in some way, and she gave orders for the purpose ; but Lord Sedley, who heard her, exclaimed,

“No, my dear Olinda, that’s quite impossible—I beg you a thousand pardons, but Pul-

cheria had that flower-bed laid out by her own directions, and she cannot bear to have any thing altered that she has once settled; you can't think how strict Pulcheria is about these things—it is one of Pulcheria's little ways."

He said this with an eagerness that showed how anxious he was to please his sister; and Olinda said mentally, "So kind a brother must be a good husband."

Sometimes, when he asserted an opinion with more than usual confidence, he would add (as if expecting to convince at once by the communication) "I assure you, *Lady Mardiston* thinks so," or, "that is my sister's decided opinion—I have heard her say so a thousand times."

From this much valued sister, there came letters of congratulations, or rather protestations of the most tender affection to her brother, and assurances of her anxiety to return to England, that she might become the guide and friend of Lady Sedley. She "should ere now have been on her way, had not the attachment

and duty she owed her beloved uncle, General Cartwright, imperiously forbid her leaving him in so uncertain and distressing a state of health as he at present endured."

Lord Sedley was deeply touched by this information. "This is so exactly like her!" he exclaimed; "a sort of kindness you cannot meet with anywhere else. My dear Olinda, you will be so happy when Pulcheria returns! she will set us all to rights. She is one of the cleverest women in the world—and so ready to advise, and arrange any thing for her friends! I may say I am most fortunate in such a relation; in fact, I had not any decided opinions till I had conversed a good deal with her;—she taught me to *think*."

Olinda would not confess even to her own mind, that Lady Mardiston had not had much success in teaching her brother to think. It was her duty and wish only to contemplate his good qualities, and she promised herself such deference to Lady Mardiston's opinion, and rea-

diness to consult her on all occasions when she had need of advice, as should prove her anxiety to adapt her conduct to her husband's standard of excellence.

The remainder of the year was passed in visiting, and a few weeks at Paris ; from which Lady Sedley returned, with a surprising accumulation of such purchases as handsome young women delight to make on that ocean of temptations.

Lord Sedley did not restrain her expense, he rather encouraged it,—though there was little need to do so, as few sciences are so easily learned as that of spending money, and Olinda found she had a natural talent for it, that hardly required cultivation. She was not, however, one of those ladies who consider it praiseworthy and expedient that all the money expended in their family should be dedicated to their own use and amusement alone ; she served many persons in need of assistance with the utmost activity and judgment, and showed so much re-

flection and prudence in the exercise of her benevolence, as justified the regret of those who witnessed it, when they saw that, on other occasions, these qualities in her were often wanting.

Among minor instances of good-nature and attention, she did not forget to send Lucy Watson such pieces of furniture as she thought might be suitable to, and useful in, the more humble abode of her old companion, of whom she frequently thought with deep compassion, when she recollected her walk to the dismantled parsonage, and considered all the toils attendant on reducing such a chaos to order, and even then the limited comforts it could afford ! Poor Lucy ! what a melancholy fate ! Yet the letters which occasionally came from Mrs. Watson were expressive of content and cheerfulness ; she did not seem oppressed by her humble cares and mechanical activity.

Readily as Olinda contributed to the expenses of Lord Sedley, and little as she had

hitherto known of the use and abuse of money, she was surprised at the unsatisfactory profusion of her husband, instances of which occurred every day.

Mr. Danby entered one morning, and began:—"You know my horse, Sedley—my horse Nutcracker?"

"Yes, I do; what of him?"

"Only that, having observed you like him, I have made up my mind you shall have him; and I do not know another man in England to whom I would part with him!"

"No, my dear fellow, I certainly will not deprive you of a horse you like; and I really at this moment do not want one, and I know you value him."

"I shall have, however, a particular pleasure in knowing he is yours; and I have ordered him to the door.—Here he is!" added Mr. Danby, going to the window, where he stood slapping his boot with his riding-whip, while Lord Sedley threw open the window, and pro-

ceeded into the balcony, making some commendation on the animal's appearance.

After some desultory conversation, Mr. Danby approached the table, saying:—"Well, Sedley, it is yours; and you shall give me but 250*l.* which is the offer Penrose and Grimsforth persecuted me to take. I will not hear of a farthing more."

Lord Sedley wrote a draft for the money, and his friend departed.

"Not that I wanted that horse," said Lord Sedley, throwing himself down on the sofa; "but Danby is a good-natured fellow; he would have been quite vexed if I had not agreed to buy it."

"Surely," said Olinda, "that is the creature which Colonel Brudenell said Mr. Danby had offered to him for 150*l.*"

"Well, perhaps it is not worth more than that; but Danby was fond of it, and would have been quite disappointed if I had not taken it."

Many instances of complaisance as expensive as the foregoing did Olinda witness in the course of two years' married life, which passed without producing any change in her exterior situation, though not without effecting much alteration in her view of it.

The new playthings which riches conferred on her had sunk considerably in her estimation: when she had worn her splendid jewels about a dozen times, she discovered that a couple of roses in her hair were more becoming than her diamond aigrette and comb; and though her well-stuffed carriage and handsome horses were as useful as when she first obtained possession of them, she quite forgot she had ever been without, or indeed that it is possible to have recourse to a less distinguished conveyance.

When habit has changed luxuries to necessities, they cease to give pleasure, though their absence may give pain. All that her change of situation had bestowed, soon became a matter of course in her eyes; all it had in-

flicted, her silly and unsuitable partner, and the ceaseless humiliation of having chosen to depend upon him, remained in full force.

The only amusement which unfortunately retained all its early attraction for Olinda, was that of being admired; for that, she still haunted the crowd of London society, and toiled to look and talk her best; and might perhaps have continued for some time content with the hollow enjoyment her vanity afforded, had she been permitted to enjoy it in peace; but disquiets soon arose from a source whence she had not apprehended their origin.

Lady Mardiston had been freed, by General Cartwright's death, from the slavery imposed by his temper and her own avarice. She had not, however, been without unforeseen difficulties.

Soon after General Cartwright had established himself at Nice, he discovered a former companion of his Indian life, who having squandered all he had gained in Asia during

a few years' residence in England, which he had been obliged to quit, had settled in France. An immoderate love for play, and the reputation of being very unscrupulous in all transactions connected with it, made him an ineligible companion, though he was rather agreeable in conversation.

To General Cartwright he possessed a great attraction, from having been known in that early and better part of life, which we love to dwell upon and refer to in later and less cheerful years. He found, in a short time, he could not dine or spend the day without Mr. Bewdley. Lady Mardiston saw this increasing intimacy with great alarm ; and all the indirect attempts which, from time to time, she cautiously made to diminish it, only seemed to add to the General's good-will to his friend,—particularly as Mr. Bewdley resembled his opponent so much in disposition and views, that he generally provided against her attacks with a foresight like her own.

General Cartwright grew worse, was alarmed about his situation, and very low-spirited. His attentive niece, having learned that an Englishman, said to be a Methodist preacher, then resident at Nice, had held forth in company on the sin of gaming, she contrived to make acquaintance with him, and to introduce him to her uncle, who was extremely struck with his conversation, and soon won to his opinions.

From that time Mr. Bewdley's influence rapidly declined — so did General Cartwright's health. Lady Mardiston redoubled her attentions, and was ably seconded by her new ally, who had first prevailed on the General to think of another world. Lady Mardiston assured Mr. Tacker this was an obligation she should never forget,—and it is probable the impression was indelible; for on the General's death, which took place three weeks after, Lady Mardiston received a bequest of 500*l.* and Mr. Tacker appeared as his heir, and in right of the will obtained 170,000*l.* burthened only with an

injunction to erect an almshouse for five old invalid soldiers of the Honourable East India Company.

It may be doubted if Lady Mardiston continued to applaud herself for the share she had taken in her uncle's reformation: at all events, she returned to England directly, to fulfil Lord Sedley's prophecy that she would "set them all to rights."

She appeared anxious to do so, and assumed the right to argue on the expediency or propriety of everybody's plans and proceedings; and frequently seemed to have no better reason for opposing her neighbour's scheme, than its not having originated with her.

Olinda, who was naturally good-humoured and obliging, and wished to satisfy Lord Sedley's partiality to his sister by showing the same deference to her which he felt, followed the advice which Lady Mardiston so liberally bestowed in all her purchases and family arrangements, changed housekeepers, horses, as

her notable sister-in-law indicated ; and would not have found such acts of complaisance at all difficult to perform, but Lady Mardiston soon interfered with Olinda's mode of living.

The opera-box was too dear—a private-box at the play was needless—so many assemblies and balls would “ruin Sedley :” they had double the number of horses they needed—and a villa near London and a house at Brighton, and the eternal furnishing and papering, would “ruin Sedley :” if Lady Sedley would live more quietly, he would not be so much at clubs, and not have so many temptations to lose his money at play, &c. These counsels were beginning to trench upon Olinda's patience ; which was still more likely to give way when she heard them followed by others yet more unpalatable.

“It was shocking to see the house full, all the morning, of idle young men coming to dawdle in the drawing-room,—Lady Sedley ought not to encourage dangles,—reputation—dignity—family union, &c.”

These remonstrances came so home, and threatened so much to interfere with Olinda's pleasures, that after a time they conquered the resolution she had formed to please and conciliate. Lady Mardiston, who resembled the storm-loving peterel, and appeared more active and prominent as gloom and disquiet increased around her, was not sorry to discover that her sister-in-law was more pertinacious and irritable when reproved for her real faults, than when limited in her expenses ; and found to her surprise that there could be interests that were not pecuniary. She availed herself of her influence over her brother, and very soon produced disagreements, which grew more bitter as they occurred more frequently. Olinda was surprised to find the good-humoured and unobserving Lord Sedley so entirely changed towards her.

It is, I believe, the very sensible but worldly-minded Lord Halifax, who has in his "Advice to his Daughters" this injunction : " If your

husband is a fool, take care that he is *your* fool." Olinda had a thousand opportunities of seeing that Lord Sedley was not "her fool," but very much Lady Mardiston's.

Every hour strengthened the disagreeable conviction. Though she had suffered herself to be surrounded by a number of young men who professed to admire her, and who she believed did really admire. She only wished to hear their indirect professions, and to suppose that they were deeply attached. She not only considered herself incapable of misconduct, but even of giving them direct encouragement, and would have thought the imputation of doing so entirely unjust ; she, therefore, considered herself as the excellent and ill-used wife of a man who did not deserve the extraordinary blessing ; owned to herself that she was "thrown away," and bitterly repented having become Lord Sedley's wife. Not that she wished to stand in the same relation to any of the men who hourly tried to make her believe that,

“ Had she tarried
To be married,
She'd have had a suitor more ;”

but she felt “ ill-used,” a vague and comprehensive term, of infinite service to all discontented persons, as a short abstract of indescribable causes of irritation and lamentation. She sighed and wondered if her existence would have been more agreeable in a small house in Upper Guildford Street, waiting for Fleetwood's return from Lincoln's Inn to their domestic tête-à-tête.

When Lord Frederick Danesford was announced, and before he had time to follow his name, it had passed through her mind how Fleetwood's brow would have contracted had Lord Frederick's *entré* been made in the little drawing-room in Upper Guildford Street, which fancy had then assigned her. And if happiness is not to be found at either side of London, with a poor man whom you do love, and a rich man whom you do not love,—if you must sigh,

whether you sit in Bloomsbury or St. George's parish, what is to be done ?

Olinda had not time to answer this question, for Lord Frederick was very agreeable that morning. He talked well and much ; and if he flattered, and if he expressed himself with more interest than is permitted towards another man's wife, it was so delicately, so imperceptibly, that it was rather to be detected by the impression it left on her mind, than by any word or look that might be recorded ; it was like the perfume of your handkerchief when taken from the most Parisian of Sachet's—exquisite, indistinct and mysterious.

It would have been bad taste to have shown the least approach to consciousness ; but Lady Sedley looked forward with much pleasure to the suffering a hopeless attachment for her would inflict on Lord Frederick, and his cogitations were perhaps equally selfish and less refined.

When they paid their annual visit at Fan-

over Castle, for the first time since her marriage, Olinda encountered Preston Fleetwood. His manner, for a moment, was slightly embarrassed, but time, new interests, had now made her more careless of his approbation ; and after the first meeting she was unconstrained in his presence : he had, therefore, many opportunities of seeing her coquetry with others, but without seeming to observe it.

Only once when he appeared engaged with a book by the fire, Olinda, who sat with a little court of beaux around her at the other end of the room, happened to raise her eyes, and saw that those of Fleetwood were observing her with attention, though not apparently with painful interest ; there was something haughty and disdainful in his expression. She felt humbled and vexed at not being what he had often foretold she *might* be ; and yet the feeling was mingled with a meaner regret at the proof his look afforded, that “ her eyes had lost the turnpike-way that led directly to his heart.”

Yet Olinda would have condemned another for regretting the power of ruling and governing a man whom she imagined she had once intensely loved.

Fleetwood's stay was short : he neither avoided nor sought Lady Sedley ; when the accidents of society brought them into conversation, he talked cheerfully, though with rather more distance of manner than had formerly existed between them.

CHAPTER X.

A NEWMARKET meeting was to take place, Lord Sedley was to proceed thither, and Olinda being alone, felt a great wish to spend a day with Lucy Watson, to whom she offered a visit, which was eagerly accepted.

Lady Sedley remembered the dimensions of the Parsonage too accurately to astonish its inhabitants by the incursion of her lounging men-servants and fine lady's-maid. These evidences of splendour were sent to the inn, three miles off, when Olinda was deposited at the abode of her friend ; as she intended, for the ensuing twenty-four hours, to resume the almost forgotten task of attiring her own person.

An agreeable change seemed already to have taken place in the Parsonage : a smart green gate stood where the fragments of the former white one had been lying during her first visit ; the little avenue was newly gravelled, the shrubbery was bright with the colours, and perfumed with the odours of all the later offerings of summer. The clematis, jasmine, and honeysuckle had resumed their upright position, and covered the repaired porch ; the little hall, new covered with marbled floor-cloth and India-matting, was fragrant with plants in green basket-stands.

At the door stood Mrs. Watson, looking happy, and rather pretty ; she welcomed Lady Sedley with the most delighted cordiality, and led her to the little drawing-room, which no longer looked on a duckweed-covered pond and forest of nettles. The little lawn was like green velvet, and was interspersed with flower-beds ; the pond had disappeared. The window had assumed French doors, and was protected by a

verandah which many creepers were struggling to cover. The room was neatly, and even elegantly furnished (partly with Olinda's own gifts), the sofas, curtains of clean gay chintz. It was a pretty miniature of the rooms Lady Sedley usually saw, though there was nothing expensive or inconsistent with the modest establishment to which it belonged.

Olinda could not help expressing her admiration at the change in this once comfortless dwelling; and Lucy then showed her the whole, the little library allotted to Mr. Watson, and above all, the dining-parlour, which had in this parsonage been "the very head and front of its offending." It was now painted to imitate oak, and the formerly sky-blue cupboards now seemed neat oak book-cases: every thing was clean, suitable, and comfortable.

Mrs. Watson knew where every thing was placed, and there was a place for every thing; their simple meals were neatly served, though a tidy maid and a shining dumb-waiter were all

their attendants. Mr. Watson was absent, but expected home that night. Olinda observed that Lucy made many little arrangements, "because Watson was coming home," with an air of great satisfaction, and her opinions were frequently prefaced with "Watson thinks so and so."

"You are quite happy here, Lucy; you seem not to have the least wish for any thing not within your reach?"

"Yes, I am indeed as happy and contented as it is possible to be in this world."

"Yet you live in complete retirement, and have a number of little cares and duties which I should have thought annoying. Are you not sometimes provoked not to be able to sit quiet on your sofa to read a new book which entertains you, which you must give up to attend to a thousand little dull domesticities?"

"Why, whatever my situation had been, I could not always have engaged in the occupation I preferred, and I believe almost any oc-

cupations of constant recurrence become agreeable, or at least so customary that we would not willingly relinquish them. Have you not heard innumerable stories of tradesmen, who, having retired on good fortunes to their country houses, have found time hang so heavy on their hands, that, as an amusement, they every day repaired to watch the operation going on at their own counter, though their presence was no longer needed there? Besides, I give up a certain portion of time to those cares; and with method you would be surprised to find how great a part of the day may still be spent as we choose."

"And do you never wish for society—general society?"

"No: though I should hear with pleasure of any agreeable person coming to settle in our neighbourhood whom I could occasionally see and chat with, yet I feel no want of society. And tell me honestly, if all *your* large acquaintance were suddenly banished, how many of them

should you regret individually, and wish back in their places?"

"Why, not very many, certainly," said Lady Sedley laughing; "yet I should not like to live alone, and some I should miss very much: in fact I should miss *all*; for it so happens, Lucy, that to please, and to be liked, are the greatest pleasures of my life:" and this sentence she concluded with a half sigh.

"Of course, those you wish principally to please are dowagers and elderly gentlemen?—at least I hope so, or such a taste may prove dangerous."

"I should like to please everybody, but I fear it is not possible."

"You must not, however, try to please everybody too much, but, like Cleopatra, 'set a bourne how far to be beloved.' I fear, Olinda, I fear you are not *quite* wise, even now."

Lady Sedley, as a defence to this charge, owned to Mrs. Watson the domestic disturb-

ances she had endured for the last year; and was exhorted not to give offence by the real fault of flirting, and to endeavour, at least, to reform the profusion which had caused Lord Sedley's difficulties.

To this she objected the little share she had latterly been allowed to have in consulting him, owing to the active and constant interference of Lady Mardiston.

Lucy replied that, even if her friend could not be of service in that way, the general prudence of her conduct would at least show she deserved to have more weight with Lord Sedley.

Olinda admitted the justice of this, and made many good resolutions.

"I do not, however, understand, Lucy, why you should be so much better contented than I am. We neither of us were what is called 'in love' with our husbands. Mine was, strictly speaking, a prudent and very advantageous match. I have obtained all that people told me

was desirable—I have heard of nothing but my good fortune since the hour Sedley proposed, yet—And you! Lucy,—all who overwhelmed me with congratulations united in finding fault with your match—and yet you are completely happy!”

“I was not a beauty—I had no right to form high expectations,” said Lucy. “I sought a rational and good-tempered companion, with whom I could live in very humble independence, and I was not disappointed. You were told that riches and rank would make you happy, and that you must marry a man of fashion—that your beauty entitled you to expect it: perhaps the opinions that guided you were mistaken ones; but you are naturally ambitious, and would not have been contented had a man like Watson, with manners unpolished by intercourse with that society (which, naturally enough, you have made your standard of excellence) proposed to you. Though his situation had been much

superior to my husband's, and his fortune approaching to wealth, you know, Olinda, you would not have been satisfied—you would not have married him. We cannot have every thing we wish: many of the circumstances which contribute the most to comfort are in Lord Sedley's situation; many of the qualities of his disposition are those which minister the most to a quiet and cheerful home. Remember all this, and resolve to be contented with your lot, and do your duty."

"I know you are right, Lucy. All that you have just said often passes through my mind: I make all manner of good resolutions; but sometimes my patience is on the eve of failing, when I see that ill-natured Lady Mardiston, whom I have taken so much pains to please, always trying to make disagreements between Lord Sedley and myself;—and to see him so completely guided by her, it is so discouraging! And you will admit, that constant disapprobation at home inclines us to

listen with more pleasure to constant admiration abroad. But you are right, Lucy, and I will be reasonable evermore. I can conceive all the peace and satisfaction felt by those who are suffering injustice with patience, from a sense of duty; I can believe in, and will experience it."

Lucy expressed her delight at this resolution; and they were interrupted by the maid, who told Lucy "Mrs. Gribble and old John Hutchins wanted to speak a word."

"Oh, Lady Sedley," she exclaimed, "you say you are curious to see the whole progress of my domestic affairs — now you shall see me as Lady Bountiful." She led the way to the little hall, where four or five poor people were waiting.

On a little table stood a small cabinet with folding doors, from which repository Lucy took various small parcels inscribed with names. "Here, Mrs. Gribble, are the powders for

your child ; and Hutchins, here is something for your rheumatism." She distributed medicine, advice, and condolence to each of her poor patients. Some of the poorest received papers, containing arrow-root and isinglass ; when all were kindly dismissed, with an injunction to call in three days, and give an account of themselves and their ailments.

" I think," said Lady Sedley, " your medical proceedings are too daring, my dear Lucy. Suppose you kill some of your patients !—you have not had a very scientific education at Fanover."

" Oh, my caution proves I am not a quack ; I never prescribe but in slight illness, and give but simple remedies. The common people in general are so ill-judging, that my most valuable secret as a physician is to tell them what they should *not* do. I am rather, as St. Lambert said of Madame de Houdetot, when she enforced the restrictions laid on his gout,

‘l’intendante de leur privations,’ than an active practitioner; and with the ignorant it is, I assure you, a very necessary affair.”

When Lady Sedley’s carriage arrived the next day, she bade Mrs. Watson a very kind adieu, and said, “Well, my dear Lucy, I see your life is a happy and a useful one; it has done me good to see it, and I go full of plans to imitate your benevolence and activity.”

These good resolutions were sincere. When Newmarket restored Lord Sedley, his wife was for many weeks, not only attentive to his slightest wish, but full of vain endeavours to propitiate Lady Mardiston; who was not, however, to be conciliated, as she very much wished to sever her brother and Olinda. Their disunion she promoted, but did not wish for a legal separation, as that would again make him an object for female contention. She knew the world too well, not to see the dangers Lady Sedley’s vanity and coquetry created; and wished to see her blamed, but not divorced.

Lady Sedley began at length to grow impatient at her want of success ; and not having the highest of all motives for fulfilling her duties under mortification and discouragement, she grew to wish for the approbation of those who witnessed her conduct, and were not prejudiced against her.

Several young men endeavoured to make her observe ; that they considered her matched beneath her merits. At first she affected not to notice the furtive expression of this feeling ; but whether they detected her growing irritation, or wished to profit by the provocation constantly given to her, the indications of their sympathy grew more marked.

One day, Lady Mardiston talked so much *at* Olinda, and excited so many vexatious speeches from Lord Sedley, that it required a most surprising effort of self-command to preserve a calm and disengaged manner, especially as the conversation took place in the presence of two young men, Colonel Fitztravers and

Lord Frederick Danesford. The former seemed uneasy, and made various attempts to draw the conversation to less irksome topics: the latter was for some minutes silent, then, suddenly rising, uttered some words about being too late for some engagement, and departed.

Two days afterwards he again called, when Olinda was alone. After a pause, he said:—
“ I fear I ought to apologise for the confusion and abruptness—for the sudden departure the other morning; but you will, I hope, pardon——”

“ Doubtless,” said Lady Sedley, laughing, “ it would, indeed, be hard upon any man who might not be allowed to end his morning visits in London as soon as he liked to do so.”

“ You would, perhaps, be surprised to hear how insupportable my visit had become when I quitted you the other day.”

“ Not at all; I can conceive being bored to any extent in the course of one’s *devoirs de société*.”

“ I could not, I own to you, have sat a

moment longer to witness that diabolical Lady Mardiston's malice without an entire loss of temper, which would have deprived me of the civil forbearance women are entitled to expect from us."

"To own the truth," said Olinda, "*my* 'civil forbearance' was on the eve of exhaustion. Lady Mardiston's malice and deliberate enmity will soon conquer my patience wholly. I begin to dislike her as much as it is allowable for one human being to dislike another."

The first complaint of a sufferer is made with timidity and moderation: there is less reserve and more energy in every succeeding one. The subject animated Lady Sedley, and she repaid her ill-natured sister-in-law all the dislike she owed her.

Lord Frederick was an able second: his comments were equally severe. At length, he exclaimed: "But what are her faults towards you, compared to those of that miserable fool—I will not call him your husband."

"Nevertheless," said Olinda, haughtily, "I

must remind you, Lord Frederick, that he *is* my husband, and I require that you should speak respectfully of him in my presence."

Lord Frederick eagerly excused himself, by protesting "his devoted friendship, admiration, and reverence for her character, had for once conquered the reserve and politeness which was due to any object, however insignificant or unworthy, that had the happiness of belonging to her."

An animated dialogue followed, in which even the apologies of Lord Frederick were interspersed with many bitter reflections on Lord Sedley; and though Olinda, at the beginning of the conversation, had attempted honestly to rebuke him, she was, at heart, too really angry with Lord Sedley not to see with pleasure that some persons did her justice, and thought of him as he deserved to be thought of.

Lord Frederick was sufficiently interested to detect this feeling, and avail himself of it. He

continued to inveigh against Lord Sedley, to set his conduct in the most unfavourable point of view ; but was full of apologies to Olinda, who, he pretended to suppose, heard all he said with impatience and anger. “ Yet, in a situation so singularly isolated as hers, the advice and sympathy of an entirely devoted friend might be useful. At times he flattered himself she was so just—he was sure she was so discerning, that she did not, could not doubt his sincere wish to serve her as a friend, or brother. He had lived a good deal in the world ; was some years older than her ; *could* claim no other distinction than that of being permitted to point out occasionally the line of conduct most likely to conduce to her advantage. He conjured her to confide implicitly in his brotherly attachment. There *had* been a time when, if circumstances had permitted him, he would have sought the happiest destiny ; the only consolation Fate had allowed him—that of being a guardian and brother to the first

and most deserving of human beings—would be sufficient to make one happy, whose fault, at least, was not selfishness.”

This is but the sketch of a discourse, or rather soliloquy, which lasted an hour and a half. During its progress, Lord Frederick sometimes rose and walked about the room ; at other times he continued striking an amber paper-knife, against a Dresden china inkstand, with so much vehemence that he broke the flowers off it. During the more touching parts of his discourse, particularly when he alluded to what *might* have been his fate, he wept very gracefully, and buried his face in the very prettiest India handkerchief I have ever seen.

The by-play (as theatrical people call it) on Olinda's side was very various. The girlish and usual resource of tearing a bouquet in small pieces, and then eating it, hardly helped through Lord Frederick's exordium ; and she had afterwards time to write the alphabet in capital letters on a very small piece of paper, before

she resorted to the expedient of twisting and untwisting one of her bright black ringlets. This practice may be safely recommended to any lady while listening to an agitating disclosure, unless she is obliged to dress for dinner in a hurry afterwards, and will not have time to curl her hair.

This interview was followed by many more ; and Lady Sedley began to think, that a male friend, who knew the world, and was a sensible man, might be of great use as a counsellor. She recollected Dean Swift's observation, " that he never knew a tolerable woman who was fond of the society of her own sex." She had the consolation of being flattered, pitied, and (she believed) loved ; yet she was but half a dupe, and meant to accept of friendship only, which she decided was no failure in her duty to Lord Sedley. Why should not Lord Frederick be the friend to her, Lady Mardiston was to him ?

She soon acquired the habit of consulting Lord Frederick, complaining to him, and tell-

ing him all that passed. 'To save her conscience, and obtain some applause for the generosity of her disposition, when her friend's abuse of her husband passed the bounds of moderation, Olinda defended him. She did not examine her own motives of action, or recollect that, during the short experience of the world gained during her unmarried life, Fleetwood had begun by giving counsel, and ended by making love.

This platonic friendship was at its height during a stay at Brighton the Sedleys made after the Newmarket meeting already mentioned: every day Lord Frederick rode out with the Sedleys, or walked with them, and every day dined in the same party.

The society being very small at that time, part of its ingredients were a family named Trenchard, consisting of husband, wife, and unmarried daughter; a family whose great riches had enabled it to mingle "with the magnates of the land," an advantage, for which their lives were a perpetual thanksgiving.

Mr. Trenchard was a plain, unaffected man of business; his wife was comely, noisy, loud, vulgar, and overbearing; the daughter, a mass of affectation and conceit. As Mrs. Trenchard was aware that her strength was in metal, she never omitted an opportunity of recalling the company to the recollection of the *price* of every thing, and was a walking tariff.

To those who had wealth and titles, she was invariably good-natured and obliging; to those who did not possess either of these qualifications, she was equally rude and disobliging,—not so much from ill-humour, as from the prudent consideration she should gain nothing by the opposite conduct, and from the agreeable novelty of finding that she had those whom she might treat as inferiors, and be rude to them with impunity. Excellent dinners, wine, and magnificent balls, obtained so much favour in the eyes of a “discerning public,” that the Trenchards could not doubt that their personal merits had obtained for them the esteem

and respect of all included in the British dominions.

Mrs. Trenchard was shrewd, and soon saw that a great intimacy subsisted between the Sedley family and Lord Frederick ; and caring less for the consequences of promoting it, than she did for the reputation of having “ the pleasantest dinners in the world,” (which eulogy she was sure to have from those who met there, whom they considered as the pleasantest people,) she never failed to ask Lord Frederick Danesford to meet Lady Sedley. They were amused ; the dinner was gay ; Lord Frederick danced at the balls with Miss Trenchard, and spent all the time in their house that he did not spend at Lord Sedley’s.

Mrs. Trenchard vindicated the delicacy of her sense of propriety by saying, when she despatched invitations to both, “ I suppose, as I ask Lady Sedley, I *must* ask Lord Frederick : *well*, if I was Lord Sedley, I know what I would do :”—or to those females with whom she

was intimate, she observed, “ I never saw any thing like it in my life !—such a flirtation, quite shocking !—poor thing ! what a pity somebody does not *advise* her !”

She had the recompense of her courtesy and forbearance, in hearing the sea-breeze on the Chain Pier and Marine Parade bring to her ear the murmur of her passing acquaintance, “ Why, Lord Frederick Danesford never leaves the Trenchards !—he *must* mean to marry the daughter.”

This, however, was said by those who had been friends of the Trenchards ten years before, who, not being initiated into the deeper mysteries of fashion, were forced to content themselves with hearing of an attachment when the parties were in Doctors’ Commons—of a duel, when it appeared headed by “ affair of honour” in the Morning Post ; who never could regale on a scandal till it was “ run to earth” by the severer papers.

As things in general are reckoned valuable

in proportion to the difficulty of attaining them, such persons are always more eager than any others to obtain some insight into the affairs of their superiors. Much to be pitied as these “fond inquirers” are, it would soothe their pains to know that there is a grade still lower in the scale of worldlings—people who absolutely “burst in ignorance,” who, from being unacquainted with persons, confuse and misapply names, and in telling a story, buckle the sins of a young spendthrift on some pious old peer’s back, and relate divisions between couples who are known to live like avadavats on the same perch.

The Trenchard having gradually travelled through these two stages of know-nothingness, was quite aware of the blessing it must prove to her to know precisely how much Lord E—— lost at Newmarket,—to see with her own eyes from beneath a scarlet *berét* (shadowed with two heron-plumes, and lighted with diamonds of unequalled size and lustre) how often Lord B—— danced with Lady Julia M——.

The last of these Brighton dinners that Olinda joined, she found Lady Grimthorpe and Mrs. Danby with the hostess, and *felt* that they had been criticising her before her entrance. She complained of cold, and Mrs. Trenchard said the weather had half killed *her*, “which obliged her to wear *this*,” holding up the end of a most splendid Indian shawl.

“What a beautiful shawl!” said Mrs. Danby.

“I am glad you like it,” said Mrs. Trenchard, “for this is one of my worst; it cost two hundred pounds. I had ordered a dozen, but there were but six that were the sort of shawl I ever wear. I can only bear the very softest and finest; and Mr. Trenchard’s agent in India knew it was of no use to send me any thing that was not the best of its kind.

“This is magnificent!” said Mrs. Danby. “I often tell Mr. Danby how much I should like to have a very magnificent shawl; but—” she sighed, and shook her head.

The dinner proceeded; the guests talked and

laughed, and lamented that their pleasant society was so soon to break up, and that they must part. A thousand schemes for bringing the same party to meet in London were proposed and resolved on, though the greater part of the company cared not if that very dinner had been their last meeting on earth.

Though Olinda thought it civil to heave one sigh of compassion to Lord Frederick, she did not violently regret their parting; though she was conscious she should miss the sympathy and admiration he had been used to pay, and she pitied him for the violent despair she supposed must then oppress him.

They had conversed so much and so freely on what was painful in her situation, that he had gradually emancipated himself from the respectful forbearance in speaking of Lord Sedley which she had at first exacted; and for the words regard and friendship, soon after were substituted attachment and devotion. He spoke less in praise of her character, and more in

praise of her beauty ; and very much more in lamentation of his ill fortune, in not having had it in his power to prevent her having become Lady Sedley.

She felt it was necessary to put an end to professions, the tendency of which she could no longer affect to mistake, yet could not resolve to deprive herself of the society which had been her only consolation for several weeks ; but she was glad of the check absence would be to their increasing intimacy.

Lord Frederick asked permission to write to her ; and after some objections, she agreed that he should, desiring that he might always write in a manner not liable to the *slightest misconception* if read by the most indifferent acquaintance.

Lord Frederick contrived to evade this by sending one sheet which might have been submitted to the most critical eye without animadversion, containing only those topics which might amuse an acquaintance ; but the same

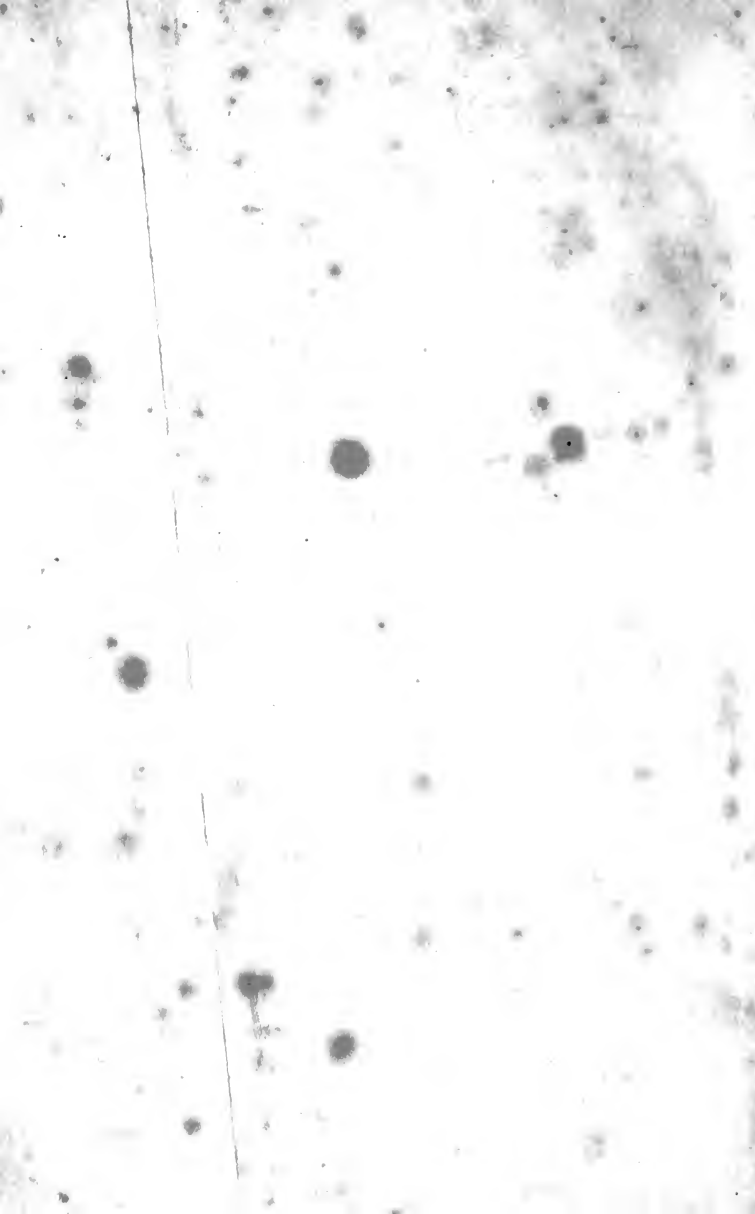
cover usually conveyed another sheet less calculated for public perusal.

All coquettes, from a secret consciousness how much vanity mingles with and prompts the attentions of their admirers, are at great pains to disguise from them how little they are cared for; well knowing there is no species of dismissal more effectual, than showing it is the homage, and not he who offers it, that was valued.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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